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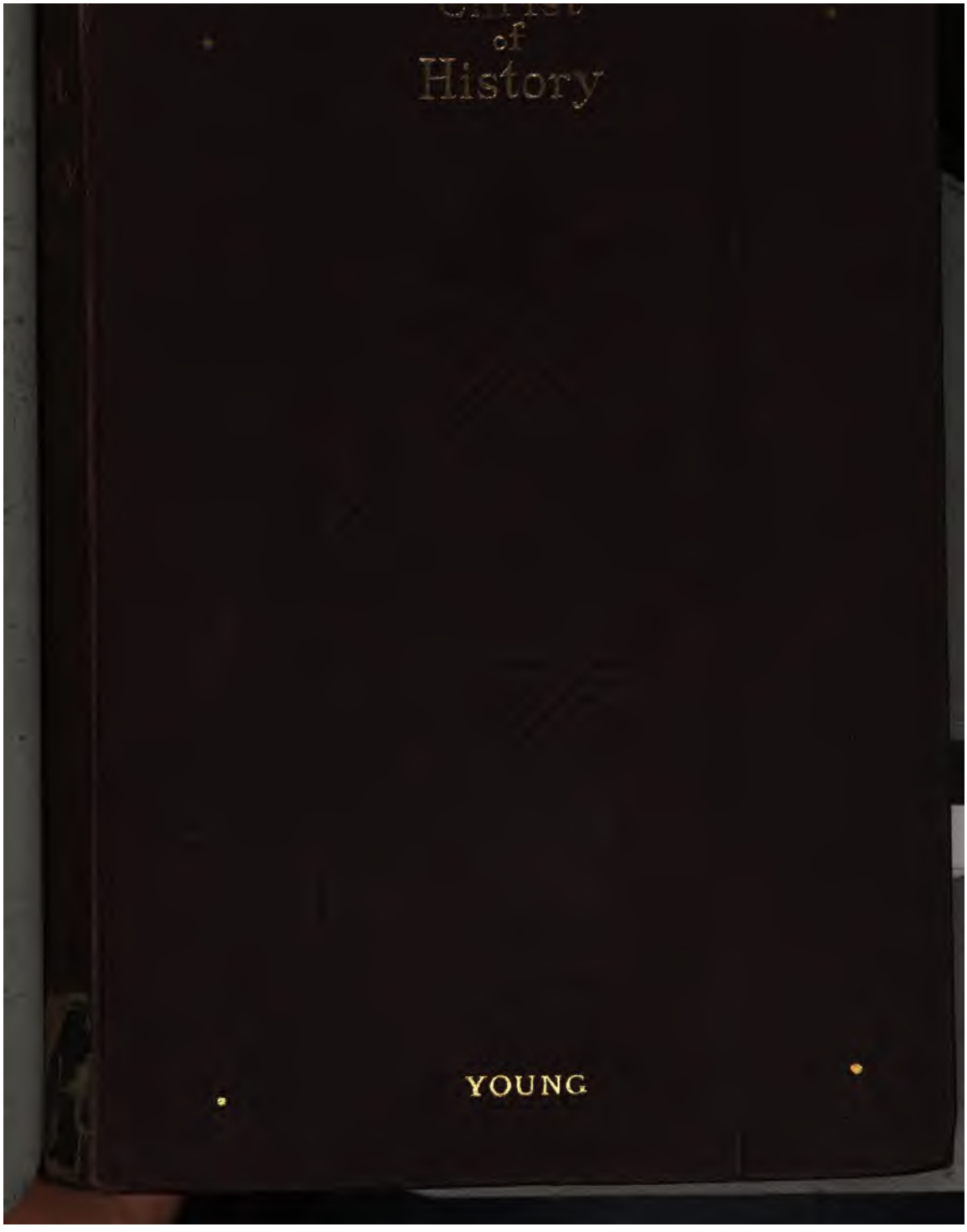
of
History
YOUNG

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THE CHRIST OF HISTORY

"And the Word was made Flesh, and dwelt among us, (and we beheld His glory, the glory as of the Only Begotten of the Father), full of grace and truth."—JOHN i. 14.

THE CHRIST OF HISTORY

An Argument grounded in the Facts of His Life on Earth

By JOHN YOUNG, LL.D.

Fourth Edition, Revised, with an Appendix, containing a brief Criticism of M. Renan's "Vie de Jésus."

STRAHAN AND CO. PUBLISHERS
56, LUDGATE HILL, LONDON
1868

[*The right of translation is reserved*]

110. g. 161.

LONDON:
R. CLAY, SON, AND TAYLOR, PRINTERS,
BREAD STREET HILL.

PREFACE.

THIS book appeals to those who are prepared to treat, with dispassionate criticism, one of the gravest subjects of human inquiry. The argument, in its idea and in its construction, differs essentially from those by which the truth it seeks to establish has hitherto been supported. It is purposely cumulative, and, if the conception be just and the execution answer to the conception, it must increase in force with the successive steps, and will be weightiest at the close.

A profound mystery is here commended to the judgment and conscience of thoughtful and candid men: a mystery which is full of light and life and

glory. There is One Wonderful Person—only One, of all that ever dwelt on this earth—who had more immediate, constant, and perfect access to the Infinite Fountain of Being, than was possible to the constitution of a *mere creature*.

LONDON, *April*, 1855.

CONTENTS.

INTRODUCTION.

USUAL FORM OF THE ARGUMENT—ANOTHER SPECIES OF PROOF—EARTHLY LIFE OF JESUS NOT SUFFICIENTLY INVESTIGATED—HUMANITY ALONE ASSUMED—INSPIRATION NOT ESSENTIAL—GENERAL HISTORICAL VALIDITY OF GOSPELS—LIFE THEY RECORD NOT MYTHICAL, BUT REAL—"BEHOLD THE MAN" . . *p.* 3

BOOK THE FIRST.

THE OUTER CONDITIONS OF THE LIFE OF CHRIST.

PART I.

SOCIAL POSITION.

HIS MOTHER—HER THOUGHTS, AND THEIR ORIGIN—INFLUENCE ON HIM—NOTHING ELSE IN EARLY LIFE FAVOURABLE TO HIS ELEVATION—POVERTY, ETC., HINDRANCES TO SUCCESS—"THE CARPENTER"—WANT OF FORMAL EDUCATION AND OF PATRONAGE . . . . . *p.* 13

PART II.

THE SHORTNESS OF HIS EARTHLY COURSE.

DURATION OF MINISTRY—HIS DEATH AND ITS EARTHLY CAUSES—INTOLERANCE OF WORLD AND HIS UNCONQUERABLE WILL—SHORTNESS OF HIS LIFE—RELATION TO THE FORM OF HIS WORK—TO HIS INFLUENCE ON SUCCEEDING AGES . . . . *p.* 24

PART III.

THE AGE AND PLACE IN WHICH HE APPEARED.

MORAL CONDITION OF THE AGE — GENTILE WORLD — JUDEA — GALILEE — NAZARETH.
MYTHICAL THEORY — IRRECONCILABLE WITH THE OUTER CONDITIONS OF CHRIST'S LIFE — THESE FACTS NOT MYTHS — NOT FOUNDED ON MESSIANIC IDEAS . . . . . p. 33

BOOK THE SECOND.

THE WORK OF CHRIST AMONG MEN.

PART I.

HIS OWN IDEA OF HIS WORK.

HIS PUBLIC POSITION, THE ACT OF HIS WILL — HIS CLAIM TO MESSIAHSHIP — HIS IDEA OF MESSIAHSHIP — NOT TEMPORAL, BUT SPIRITUAL — NOT NATIONAL, BUT UNIVERSAL — ALONE IN HIS AGE, HIS COUNTRY, THE WORLD . . . . . p. 41

PART II.

COMMENCEMENT OF HIS MINISTRY.

BEGAN WITH THE AGE AND COUNTRY COLLECTIVELY — THEIR CHARACTER — CHRIST, THE INCARNATE CONSCIENCE OF BOTH — HE UNCONSCIOUS OF PERSONAL GUILT — BEGAN BY REBUKING, IN ORDER TO REFORM, THE NATION . . . . . p. 51

PART III.

THE MARKED CHARACTER OF HIS PUBLIC APPEARANCES.

I. SEVERITY — MORAL CONDITION OF PALESTINE — SCENES OF HIS EARLY MINISTRY—SCRIBES AND PHARISEES—FORMALISM AND HYPOCRISY. II. TENDERNESS — INSTANCES AND SOURCE. III. SIMPLICITY—GENERAL CHARACTER OF HIS LIFE — RELATION OF HIS TEACHING TO TIMES, PLACES, AND PERSONS—HIS WORDS AND ILLUSTRATIONS. IV. AUTHORITY—TESTIMONY OF HEARERS—CLAIM TO CONNEXION WITH GOD . . . . *p.* 61

PART IV.

HIS TEACHING.

CHAPTER I.

PRELIMINARY GENERAL VIEWS.

RECORD OF CHRIST'S TEACHING—NO FORMAL ACCOUNT OF IT—MIND OF CHRIST, SOLE FOUNTAIN OF GOSPELS—SUMMARY OF HIS TEACHING — REIGN OF GOD ON EARTH — "KINGDOM OF HEAVEN." ETC. . . . . *p.* 78

CHAPTER II.

OF THE SOUL.

SECTION I.—REALITY AND GREATNESS OF THE SOUL.

IGNORANCE OF MATTER AND SPIRIT—IDEA OF SOUL, INTUITIVE —UNIVERSAL INDIFFERENCE TO SOUL—JESUS REVEALS IT—NO FORMAL PROOF—HIS TEACHING BASED ON IT—ORIGIN OF SOUL —ATTRIBUTES—GOSPELS TEACH ITS UNUTTERABLE WORTH—DETERMINES MAN'S PLACE IN SCALE OF BEING . . . *p.* 92

SECTION II.—THE SOUL'S ACCOUNTABILITY AND IMMORTALITY.

RATIONAL AND MORAL NATURE ACCOUNTABLE—ACTIVITY, UNCONSCIOUS, INSTINCTIVE, INTELLIGENT, AND VOLUNTARY—GROUND OF RESPONSIBILITY—IN CHRIST'S TEACHING—LAST JUDGMENT—IMMATERIALITY AND IMMORTALITY—PERDITION OF SOUL—SIN AND DEATH—ELEMENT OF ETERNAL LIFE—"LIFE AND IMMORTALITY BROUGHT TO LIGHT BY THE GOSPEL" . . . *p.* 102

CHAPTER III.

OF GOD.

SECTION I.—SPIRITUALITY, UNITY, AND MORAL PERFECTION.

GOD, FOUNDATION OF ALL RELIGION—BEING OF GOD ASSUMED IN GOSPELS—AN ORIGINAL INTUITION—PROOF IN OUR NATURE OF DIVINE SPIRITUALITY—ANGELIC SOULS—SPIRITUALITY INCLUDES LIFE AND INTELLIGENCE—VEGETABLE, ANIMAL, INTELLECTUAL, MORAL LIFE—THE ORIGINAL, PARENTAL LIFE—INFINITE INTELLIGENCE—CHRIST AT JACOB'S WELL—ONE INFINITE ACCOUNTS FOR EXISTING PHENOMENA—MORE THAN ONE CONTRADICTORY—DUALISM—POLYTHEISM—A SUPREME AMONG THE GODS—CHRIST PROCLAIMING UNITY—HEATHEN SENTIMENTS AND PRESENTIMENTS—CHARACTER OF PAGAN GODS—JEWISH MISREPRESENTATIONS—THE GOD OF CHRIST PERFECT EXCELLENCE . . . . . *p.* 112

SECTION II.—THE PATERNITY OF GOD.

TYPE, IN MAN, REALITY IN GOD—CHILDSHIP OF ALL SOULS—IN SOUL ONLY, LIKENESS TO GOD—AUTHORITY IN GOD—LOVE—GREAT FAMILY OF GOD—INTRODUCTION OF MORAL EVIL—FATHERHOOD OF GOD IN TEACHING OF JESUS—PARENTAL LOVE THE MOVING POWER IN UNIVERSE . . . . . *p.* 128

CHAPTER IV.

RECONCILIATION OF SOUL AND GOD.

DEPARTURE FROM GOD THE ROOT AND ESSENCE OF EVIL—EVER-WIDENING—RETRIBUTIVE CHARACTER—RUIN OF THE SPIRITUAL NATURE—UNION AND SEPARATION OF MINDS—RECONCILIATION THE END OF CHRIST'S MEDIATION, OF HIS LIFE, AND OF HIS DEATH . . . . . *p.* 137

PART V.

ARGUMENT FROM HIS WORK TO HIS DIVINITY.

HUMAN SYSTEMS OF RELIGIOUS TRUTH—MOHAMMEDANISM—HINDOOISM AND BUDDHISM—TALMUDISM—ANCIENT JEWISH SCRIPTURES—STOICISM, EARLIER AND LATER—ERRORS AND EXCELLENCES—SOCRATICISM OR PLATONISM—PHILO-JUDÆUS—LIFE OF SOCRATES—HIS DEATH—HIS FAITH AND HOPES—CHRISTIAN VIEWS OF THEM AND HIM—CHRISTIANITY CONTRASTED WITH TEACHING OF SOCRATES—SOLUTION, CHRIST'S TRUE DIVINITY. *p.* 147

BOOK THE THIRD.

THE SPIRITUAL INDIVIDUALITY OF CHRIST.

PART I.

CHRIST'S ONENESS WITH GOD.

COMMUNION BETWEEN CREATED AND UNCREATED MIND—HUMAN SIDE OF THE DOCTRINE—EFFORT TO CONCEIVE GOD—FAITH IN HIS NEARNESS TO US—IN HIS LOVE—SENSE OF DEPENDENCE—VENERATION—TRUST—GOD LISTENING AND RESPONDING TO THE SOUL—TO CHRIST, GOD THE GREATEST REALITY—CHRIST, ALONE WITH GOD—ORIGINAL, HABITUAL UNION—WALKED WITH GOD. *p.* 189

PART II.

FORMS OF CHRIST'S CONSCIOUSNESS.

NATURE OF CONSCIOUSNESS—ITS UNIVERSALITY—VALUE OF ITS TESTIMONY — CHRIST'S CONSCIOUSNESS — HIGHEST DEVELOPMENT—EXPRESSED TO THE LAST—INTERPRETATION— PROOF OF THE VALIDITY OF HIS CLAIMS . . . . . *p.* 199

PART III.

THE TOTALITY OF HIS MANIFESTATION BEFORE THE WORLD.

TRUE MAN—PECULIAR SUSCEPTIBILITY—SUFFERINGS AND PROVOCATIONS—UNCONQUERABLE PATIENCE—SPIRITUAL PERFECTION —SIMPLICITY AND FRESHNESS—UNIFORM EXCELLENCE—JESUS A MANIFESTATION, NOT AN EFFORT—A PURE ORIGINAL, NOT AN IMITATION—ALONE IN HISTORY . . . . . *p.* 212

PART IV.

THE MOTIVE OF HIS LIFE.

ABSENCE OF SELFISHNESS—PRESENCE OF PURE AND LOFTY MOTIVES —HIS ACTIVE GOODNESS—VIEWS OF THE SOUL—LOVE OF MAN AS MAN—HIS LIFE A VOLUNTARY SACRIFICE . . . . *p.* 225

PART V.

HIS IMMOVEABLE FAITH.

HIS FOREKNOWLEDGE OF HIS DEATH—SOLITARINESS—WAS NEVER, HIMSELF, DISAPPOINTED—TRUTH, A PROVISION FOR THE WANTS, CURE FOR THE EVILS OF THE WORLD—ATTRIBUTES OF GOD— EXPRESSIONS AND PROOFS OF CHRIST'S ASSURANCE—INSTITUTION OF THE SUPPER—INTERPRETATION OF FACTS . *p.* 231

PART VI.

THE ARGUMENT FROM HIS CHARACTER TO HIS DIVINITY.

MORAL ASPECTS AND OUTWARD FACTS OF CHRIST'S HISTORY—A CHARACTER SUCH AS HIS NOT ONCE BEFORE OR SINCE REALIZED —INTERESTS OF TRUTH AND VIRTUE—MORAL CONDITION OF MANKIND CHARGED ON GOD—HUMANITY IN CHRIST PECULIARLY CONDITIONED—IDEA OF INCARNATION, UNIVERSAL—A PRIMITIVE REVELATION—A UNIVERSAL WANT—PROVISION FOR THIS WANT MADE ONCE FOR ALL—HIGHER NATURE, NOT HIGHER OFFICE MERELY — ABSOLUTE DIVINITY — SECURED AIDS AND INFLUENCES INCOMMUNICABLE TO OTHERS . . . . *p.* 240

CONCLUSION.

INCARNATION OF JESUS THROWS LIGHT ON ALL THE WONDERS OF HIS HISTORY—SUPERNATURAL BIRTH—RESURRECTION AND ASCENSION — HIS MIRACLES — SPIRITUAL MEANING — TYPICAL CHARACTER — SOPHISTRY OF STRAUSS — EXTRAORDINARY TOKENS OF DIVINITY DEMANDED—THE VOICE OF GOD—WORLD SUMMONED TO LISTEN AND BELIEVE . . . . . *p.* 250

APPENDIX.

CONTAINING A BRIEF CRITICISM OF THE "VIE DE JÉSUS," BY M. RENAN. . . . . *p.* 259

THE

CHRIST OF HISTORY.

ETC.

IN THREE BOOKS.

BOOK I.

THE OUTER CONDITIONS OF THE LIFE OF CHRIST.

BOOK II.

THE WORK OF CHRIST AMONG MEN.

BOOK III.

THE SPIRITUAL INDIVIDUALITY OF CHRIST.

INTRODUCTION.

USUAL FORM OF THE ARGUMENT—ANOTHER SPECIES OF PROOF—EARTHLY LIFE OF JESUS NOT SUFFICIENTLY INVESTIGATED—HUMANITY ALONE ASSUMED—INSPIRATION NOT ESSENTIAL—GENERAL HISTORICAL VALIDITY OF GOSPELS—LIFE THEY RECORD NOT MYTHICAL, BUT REAL—"BEHOLD THE MAN."

A CHANGE in the form of the argument for the proper Deity of Jesus Christ seems to be demanded in our day. Accepted and familiar proofs may not have lost their strength, but they have lost their freshness, and they are wanting in adaptation to the peculiar intellectual culture and structure of the present age. Sacred criticism, directed to the historical, prophetical, and devotional books of the Old Testament, and to the Gospels and Epistles of the New Testament, has long submitted its methods and their results to the judgment of the world. Dogmatic theology, connecting itself closely with the reigning logic and metaphysics, has long announced its expositions of sacred truth. Arguments on this subject have been accumulated in astonishing number, and have long maintained an acknowledged prescriptive authority.

But it is conceivable that an excess of resources may prove hardly less fatal than a palpable deficiency. Men are provoked to resist that which, instead of asking favour, commands and compels submission. It is sometimes wise to take not the very highest ground which it is possible to maintain, but the lowest; and if, on this lowest ground, we can succeed in producing an unlooked-for amount of materials, the feeling of surprise conciliates the heart, and assists, instead of obstructing, the mental process which issues in conviction. Perhaps the earthly life of Jesus, apart from subtle criticism and from systematic, metaphysical theology, may be found to offer original and extraordinary evidences of his Divinity; evidences which, by their number, their harmony, and their force, shall amount to positive proof of this great mystery. This region, owing to the productiveness of others better known, has never been cultivated with the pains which it deserves. But the peculiar kind of proof, nevertheless, which it yields, we presume to think is at once the most intelligible and the most convincing which on such a subject can be offered to reason and conscience.

A temperate and conciliatory spirit is demanded towards those to whom we present the claims of religion; and the exhibition of such a spirit cannot injure or endanger Christianity. With perfect safety

we may forego, for the time, the inheritance of evidence and of argument bequeathed from the past, by the researches and the erudition of enlightened men. Demanding nothing more than the simple humanity of Jesus of Nazareth, we shall venture from this platform to assert and expound his true Divinity. Dismissing all preconceptions, however fondly cherished and however long adopted into the faith of the Churches, assuming nothing which is not virtually and even formally admitted by enemies as well as friends, we hope to show that the manhood of Christ, as it appealed to the senses and the minds of the men of his own times, supplies and sustains the proof of his Godhood.*

A still larger sacrifice, in the same spirit of conciliation, will be found compatible with safety and honour. The inspiration of the Christian records is not to be demanded here. No collection of writings has passed through a fiercer ordeal than the books of the New Testament. The severity of criticism, it may be safely said, the venomous malignity with

* The pre-supposition (Voraussetzung) with which Neander commences his Life of Christ is certainly fatal to it as an argument, although its value as an exposition of the Gospels, and a critical defence of their authenticity, is in no degree affected by this circumstance. What he calls "the Christian consciousness" (*das Christliche Bewustsein*) is not innate, but acquired, the result of education, and therefore of no authority.—*Das Leben Jesu Christi*, Einleitung, s. 4. Hamburg, 1845.

which they have been assailed, has no parallel in the history of literature or of the religions of the world. The facts, the chronology, the references to contemporaneous history, to political and social interests, to science and philosophy; the doctrines and the ethical principles of the New Testament; the honesty, intelligence, and capacity of the writers, and the character of their production as a whole, have been subjected to the scrutiny, often intensely prejudiced, of all nations and of all orders of intellect for eighteen centuries. It is at least grateful to think that, owing to this very cause, an astonishing amount of power, otherwise unrevealed, has been evoked and effectively put forth in defence of these holy writings. But the inspiration of the New Testament, as that is popularly understood, shall not be insisted on in the present argument; and it shall suffice for us, if this book be allowed to stand only not lower than other equally ancient productions. Whatever abatement from its historical validity can be plausibly demanded on account of the remoteness of the period, the character of the age, or the position of the writers, it shall be conceded. For the sake of argument, though only for this, it shall be granted that the Evangelists were not secured against mistakes, and that therefore the justice of all their sentiments, and the accuracy of all their details, are not unquestion-

able. We go farther; let all in these sacred records which belongs to the sphere of the miraculous be ascribed, for the present, to the habit of the Jewish mind, to the influence of their national history, or to the common tendency to exaggeration. We assume nothing more than this, that the Gospels, in a broad and general sense, are historical and veritable: and this, in point of fact, is virtually granted by all.

By far the ablest of the modern adversaries of the validity of the New Testament, who has subjected it to the most severe analysis, and brought to his task the largest amount of learning and of philosophic power, has admitted at least a basis, even a broad basis, of historical truth in the Gospels. He concedes that Jesus of Nazareth lived on earth, and that his character, saving the miraculous element so largely blended with the delineation of it, substantially was what it is represented to be by the Evangelists.* This admission indeed cannot be withheld, without encountering even graver difficulties than are created by conceding it. The antiquity of the records being granted—and it is granted at this day

* "Das Leben Jesu." Germany very widely consents that this attempt to place the Christian Gospels in the same category with heathen mythologies is an ingenious fallacy, an elaborate defeat. One thing we must be permitted to mark: Strauss begins his criticisms by what is calculated, if it do not aim, to create a prejudice, at all events a *pre*-judgment. This must be severely reprobated; at the least it is unscientific and unphilosophical.

by all who have seriously investigated the subject, and who, on the ground of scholarship and of intellectual and moral competency, are entitled to consideration—one or other of two hypotheses is unavoidable. Either such a man as Jesus of Nazareth really appeared on earth about the time which the Christian records fix, or the writers of the Gospels gave form and life to a mere idea which never had an outward realization, and existed nowhere but in their minds. No third supposition is conceivable on any rational ground; one or other of these two must be accepted; and in truth there is no choice between them, for the difficulties involved in the latter are wholly insurmountable. On the supposition that Jesus of Nazareth never actually existed, it is not within the range of rational belief that the idea of such a being was formed in that country, that age, and in the minds of such men as the Evangelists are held to have been, and as in point of mental endowment and culture and social rank they certainly were. When it shall have been fully ascertained what that being who is presented to us in the Gospels really was, the evidence will be irresistible that this is not within the range of rational belief, but is so unlikely and unnatural as to be morally impossible. It would contradict all experience and all legitimate induction from experience,

and be as utterly out of the course of human things as any miracle ever recorded. It is abundantly demonstrable, and the evidence will accumulate as the present investigation advances, that the Evangelists, instead of embodying a conception of their own minds, must have witnessed the life which they describe, never could have conceived it unless they had first witnessed it, and were able to represent it in the manner they have done, only because it had actually passed under their immediate and frequent observation.

The Gospels contain the history of a life once actually spent on this earth. The writers relate on the whole what they saw and heard, and on the whole convey the impression which was left on their minds by a real, living being. It is enough. This lowest standpoint is enough. Take only the earthly life of Christ, suppose only that in a broad general sense it is faithfully represented—behold only the Man—He shall indicate and demonstrate union with absolute Godhead. Such a Humanity as his is utterly inexplicable, except on the ground of true Divinity.

BOOK THE FIRST.

THE OUTER CONDITIONS OF THE LIFE OF CHRIST.

IN THREE PARTS.

PART I.—HIS SOCIAL POSITION.

II.—THE SHORTNESS OF HIS EARTHLY COURSE.

III.—THE AGE AND PLACE IN WHICH HE APPEARED.

PART I.

CHRIST'S SOCIAL POSITION.

HIS MOTHER—HER THOUGHTS, AND THEIR ORIGIN—INFLUENCE ON HIM—NOTHING ELSE IN EARLY LIFE FAVOURABLE TO HIS ELEVATION—POVERTY, ETC. HINDRANCE TO SUCCESS—"THE CARPENTER"—WANT OF FORMAL EDUCATION AND OF PATRONAGE.

THAT life, on which it is proposed to found an argument for Divinity, was singular in the materials and the mode of its structure. The outward and the inward, the early and the ultimate forms of every earthly course are mysteriously related to each other. The age, the country, the physical organization, education, society, and the like, exert an acknowledged influence in the intellectual and moral development of a human being. Native force of character may rise above the accidents of birth and early position and all the external conditions by which the soul is limited, so that it can never be predicted with certainty, from any given circumstances, what a man's future life shall be, because we can never foresee how

the action of these circumstances may be modified, and what minute and delicate influences may either neutralise or assist their effect in the progress of years. But the fact of dependence and of moral causation, nevertheless, has almost the constancy and sovereignty of a universal law. The seeds of that definite form which each individual life eventually assumes will be found to lie within its foregoing history. The future is never accidental and capricious, a void filled up with materials, gathered according to no principle and disposed without order or law. It is rather the natural product of elements which existed and acted in the earlier period of life. The present and the future stand almost in the relation of cause and effect. Events, influences, incidents in the one largely contribute to make the other what it ultimately becomes. Usually a man's early life and position will be found to contain the germ and to furnish the true interpretation of his future character and history.

But it will be proved that these common formative principles utterly fail to explain the life of Jesus. His life, we shall find, stands out a mysterious exception to all the ordinary laws that govern the earthly destiny of men. What He ultimately became, so far from harmonising with his early course and his outward condition, was reached not because

but in spite of all the influences descending upon him from both of these regions. It was not a natural result of the circumstances amidst which he grew up, but one which, unless owing to some hidden antagonist force, these circumstances must have rendered absolutely impossible.

One specific agency we can recognise, though only one, which undeniably had an effect in preparing Jesus in his early life for the position to which he eventually rose. There was one person, nearer to him, and dearer than any other, who must have exerted an influence in the formation of his character favourable to the peculiar development which it was destined to reach. That person was his mother. The Virgin Mary entertained from the first very exalted notions respecting her Son. The origin of these notions cannot be unfolded here, because we have consented to surrender for the time all that is supernatural in the New Testament records. The mystery of Christ's birth, the vision of the shepherds of Bethlehem, the visit of the Chaldean sages, the prophetic words of Simeon and Anna in the Temple, must therefore be left out of this discussion. Perhaps it will be found by and by, that facts of this nature beautifully harmonise with the calmest and soundest views which can be taken of the Christian writings. But no use must be made of them here, and they

must not be suffered to influence either the narrative or the argumentative part of this investigation.

Twelve years after the birth of Christ, an incident occurred which is the more remarkable, because it forms the solitary piece of intelligence which is communicated to us respecting a period of his life extending over nearly thirty years. On the occasion of the Passover, the child Jesus remained behind in Jerusalem after Mary and her husband Joseph had left to return home, and at the end of three days he was found by them in the Temple, sitting at the feet of the teachers of the Law, listening to them and asking them questions. The circumstance of Jesus being so long separated from his earthly guardians without their knowledge, is easily accounted for by the usages of the Passover-time. Even his being found with the teachers of the Law is not out of harmony with the history and manners of the period. The Jewish historian relates something of this kind which happened to himself when he was about fourteen years of age.*

Whatever this incident can reasonably be supposed to involve is granted freely. It is granted also that the words of the child to his mother, when she

* *Ἔτι δ' ἄρα, παῖς ὢν περὶ τεσσαρεσκαιδέκατον ἔτος, διὰ τὸ φιλογράμματον ὑπὸ πάντων ἐπῃνούμενος, συνιόντων ἀεὶ τῶν ἀρχιερέων καὶ, τῶν τῆς πόλεως πρώτων ὑπὲρ τοῦ παρ' ἐμοῦ περὶ τῶν νομίμων ἀκριβέστερόν τι γνῶναι.*—Vita Josephi, sec. 2, in Oper. Geneva, 1633.

rebuked him for tarrying behind, "Wist ye not that I must be about my Father's business?" indicated a maturity of mind, a thirst for knowledge, a love of truth, and a faith in the being, presence, and favour of God, very extraordinary. It is granted that these words must have sunk into the heart of Mary, must have renewed the impression created by the occurrences of his infancy and childhood, perhaps recalled her first views in their mysterious power, and revived all her early hopes. But after this incident twelve years again passed by, and half that number more, and all the while not a sign of any kind appeared. In the long and dreary interval, impressions and hopes so utterly unsupported as hers must have gradually faded, and at last altogether perished. We can only conjecture what opinions Mary for herself entertained, whether at an earlier or at a later period, respecting the rank and office of the Messiah; but in all probability they partook of the ignorance, and prejudice, and error of those of the Jews in general in that age. It is willingly conceded that at the least she must have believed that her son was destined by God to a position of great sacredness and dignity; and this faith, no one can doubt, must have influenced her behaviour towards him and her method of treating and training him. Certainly she would strive to impart her own views to his mind,

and to fix within him the idea of his destiny, as she herself understood it.

But this, be its value what it may, was the solitary agency in the early life of Jesus helpful to his subsequent elevation; and except this, not a single friendly element can be discovered throughout the history. All else is not only not auxiliary, but thoroughly obstructive. When the whole of the conditions under which the destined development of his character and his life was effected shall have been carefully examined, it will then appear, we presume, that that character and life were not a natural growth for which his circumstances, according to the ordinary laws of providence and of the human mind, sufficiently account, but, on the contrary, were originated and sustained in spite of circumstances with which no earthly force could have contended, and must have had their real foundation in a force which was preternatural and Divine.

The New Testament makes no secret of the place which Jesus occupied in the social scale. The family from which he sprang belonged to the lower ranks of life; Joseph, the husband of Mary, being a working carpenter. His birth-place, the wanderings of his infancy, his home in such a village as Nazareth, his humble occupation for many years, his dependence afterwards on the labour of his disciples and the

charity of other friends, are affecting evidences of the poverty of his condition through life. The fact is noticeable in itself, but it is profoundly interesting to those who find in his later manifestations a Being who irresistibly draws towards himself their veneration, their trust, and their hope. They believe him to be the Redeemer of the world, and are astonished that, when on earth, he was ranked with the ignoble and the poor. But the fact, as they dwell upon it, becomes suggestive and quickening, and is fitted as they think to shed marvellous peace into the bosom of the humblest sons of men, and to reveal a tender and holy bond of sympathy between Jesus of Nazareth and them. He endured the humiliations, the burdens, and the straits of poverty, and thus became in a touching sense the brother of the sorrowing and the poor. It gives to poverty a singular sacredness and dignity. The principle, not new in itself, acquires new impressiveness, that social rank is not the standard of social worth, or of personal excellence and power. The great lesson is pronounced with unexampled solemnity in the hearing of the world, that men and things are not always, in reality, what they are in appearance. It is taught that justice, truth, love, and moral and spiritual worth, must be reverenced in whatsoever associations they are found. The accidents of outward condition do not alter the

essential character of good or of evil. Poverty and ignorance, and still more poverty and vice, are not inseparable, either in fact or in the judgment of right-thinking men. They do often co-exist, and there are very obvious causes which at once explain why they should often co-exist. But the connexion is not uniform, and it is not inevitable. On the other hand, great wealth is seldom found associated with the highest forms of spiritual excellence. Certainly the love and the high estimation of wealth, rarely separated from the possession of it, are utterly incompatible with elevation, expansion, and deep spirituality of character.

But the prevailing sentiment of mankind is not to be mistaken. Even if this sentiment were not hostile, it is plain, on other grounds, that a poor man, just because he is poor, must necessarily encounter peculiar hindrances in forming and executing any purpose, however modest, for the good of his race. His knowledge of the world, for example, his acquaintance with books, and his intercourse with able and cultivated men, must be exceedingly limited. By the necessity of his condition, he is shut out from much that is quickening and liberalising, and fitted to impart comprehension, self-reliance, and freedom. But in addition to real hindrances of this nature, he has to struggle against a deep and

almost universal prejudice. It is not supposed, that anything great or good can originate with persons like him. Such is the evil effect of social distinctions, that it is almost felt that nothing great or good ought to originate with persons like him; and that, if it did, this would almost amount to a crime against the ordained course of the world. The contrast between his condition and his aims is painfully present even to himself, but still more to others; and the more aspiring these aims are, this contrast operates the more oppressively and injuriously. The instances are rare indeed in which a poor and unknown man has risen above neglect and prejudice and the pressure of his condition, and alone has worked out a great idea which his mind had conceived. An indefinite amount of obstruction to his work and his triumph was involved in the mere fact that Jesus belonged through life to the lower ranks of society.

In addition to the fact of poverty, it must be taken into account that almost the entire of Christ's life was spent in manual labour. Dwelling, till he was thirty years of age, in the house of Joseph the carpenter, we are left to imagine that he was engaged in the same handicraft. And this matter is set at rest by the question of the people, no doubt put contemptuously, which is distinctly mentioned by one of the Evangelists, "Is not this the carpenter, the son of

Mary!"* Honest labour, honest hand-labour, is dignified and dignifying. The discipline of bodily toil and struggle, wisely regarded, may exert a wholesome influence on the higher nature, may serve noble purposes, and is fitted, under certain conditions, to form vigorous, high-toned, resolute souls. Even the acquisition of superior knowledge and of the power which knowledge creates, though difficult, is not impossible to a working man; and the workshop and the farm have nourished for the world some of its ablest benefactors. At the same time, a life taken up with the labours of the hands is certainly not favourable to high mental development. Such a life cannot afford the necessary amount of leisure for study and research; and where the energies of the body are continually taxed and strained, it is not likely that at the same time the powers of the mind can be vigorously put forth, and that extensive intellectual acquisitions can be made. Jesus of Nazareth was a common working carpenter till he was thirty years of age.

What direct and formal education he received can be only conjectured, but the high probability is, that it must have been of the most limited character. Some of his countrymen, when they first heard his discourses, exclaimed, "How knoweth this man letters, having never learned?"† It must have been

* Mark vi. 3. † John vii. 15.

commonly known that he had never learned, that he had received little regular instruction; perhaps none. Even in the absence of this positive evidence, the state of the Jewish nation at the time, the rude condition of the village in which his life was passed, the humble position of his family, and his own destination to the trade of a carpenter, would have led us to conclude that he was unlearned and uneducated.

High patronage may compensate the absence of other advantages. But the poor were the associates of Jesus—his only associates from first to last—and of men of wealth and influence he knew little. Few thus distinguished, ever deigned to notice him. He received no countenance from the civil government of the country; yet less was he sanctioned by the priesthood of the nation. They were his enemies from the first, and were the secret cause of all his sufferings and of his cruel death. With the learned or the rich—with the ecclesiastical or the civil authorities—with the influential classes of society, or even with single individuals of name and weight—he never had the most distant association. Jesus Christ was alone, a poor artisan, uneducated and unpatronised. His entire social circumstances pronounce the impossibility, in human judgment, of his elevation to power and glory.

PART II.

THE SHORTNESS OF HIS EARTHLY COURSE.

DURATION OF MINISTRY—HIS DEATH AND ITS EARTHLY CAUSES—INTOLERANCE OF WORLD AND HIS UNCONQUERABLE WILL—SHORTNESS OF HIS LIFE—RELATION TO THE FORM OF HIS WORK—TO HIS INFLUENCE ON SUCCEEDING AGES.

THE disciples of Christianity suggest that, had the Redeemer of the World lived to old age, the impression, at least on their minds, of feebleness, imperfection, and decrepitude must have been deeply injurious. They suggest, besides, that Jesus lived long enough to gain a full experience of the world,—a knowledge of the duties, trials, and hazards of life,—and long enough for the full probation of his personal character and for the completion of his great work for the world. Whatever force there be in these suggestions, let the simple fact of the case be here briefly stated: Jesus passed away from the earth when he was only thirty-three years of age. Thirty years he spent in Nazareth; for three years he ministered before the world, and then he suffered death by crucifixion.

The early death of Christ is one of those peculiar conditions which give extraordinary interest and emphasis to his character and to the actual results of his course. This fact, viewed in connexion with its consequents, is so strange, that it is imperative to attempt a brief investigation of the causes which led to it. In this discussion, the fact is regarded simply in its historical significance, not at all in its doctrinal and spiritual relations. The nature and design of Christ's death, or its bearing on the redemption of the world, or the high and holy purposes which God might contemplate in it, are not to be considered here. The human causes only, which fixed so early a period to the life of Jesus—not those which lay in the Eternal mind, but only those which sprung up on this earth, —come within the scope of the present argument.

Among these causes, the first place must be assigned to the intolerance of the world; the second to that force of will in the soul of Christ, which no amount of intolerance could conquer. With respect to the first, the simple historical fact is, that men could endure Jesus Christ no longer, and were in haste to put him to death. Spiritual truth and its advocates are offensive to the world. The one and the other may and do commend themselves to the human conscience, and are often secretly reverenced even where they are publicly disowned. All that is

of God shall finally triumph, as surely as God lives; but struggles, prostrations, defeats, may, must precede triumph. Truth comes into collision with men's immediate interests—with their sins, exposing and denouncing them—with established opinions and usages—with what is held sacred and has grown venerable by age,—and the conflict cannot but be prolonged and fierce. Men cannot lightly bear to be detected in their sins—the interested and the privileged cannot brook to be dispossessed—and, above all, the principle of unlimited intellectual and religious toleration is about the last which individuals or communities are disposed to adopt. That which is divinely true and pure must long appeal in vain to the judgments and hearts of men, and long suffer opposition and scorn and evil treatment at their hands; and when, in its contact with any age or nation, it directly strikes at ancient beliefs and at cherished privileges, interests, or vices, we cannot wonder that the hatred awakened against it should become envenomed and implacable, should trample on humanity and justice, and should even clamour for the destruction of its apostles. The world, conscious of evil, but proud, impatient, and incensed, can bear no longer, and crucifies the advocate of truth. But there is always a significant resurrection after such a death.

The world demanded that Jesus Christ should die. There was nothing in his spirit, doctrine, or life to justify the demand. It will be shown hereafter that he was no ambitious aspirant to power and fame, no enemy to Judea or to Rome, to the Sanhedrim, the temple, or the God of his country; nor were corrupt and cruel men able to substantiate any such charges against him. But he had incurred the violent hatred of the leaders of all the religious sects in his day. His free and spiritual views; his deep faith and glowing piety; his open sanction of the innocent usages and institutions of society; his appeals, not to tradition or prescription, but to the common sense of mankind, and his use of common incidents and common words, not to name his reproofs, as severe as they were notoriously well deserved, rendered him obnoxious alike to Pharisees, Sadducees, Ascetics, and Mystics. They all disliked his teaching, were provoked by his calm and patient spirit, were jealous of his growing influence, and saw, in his entire life, their own public condemnation. These sects, while contending with one another, united in common hostility to him; and their leaders never rested till at their instigation the people, too ready to obey interested and wicked counsel, demanded his crucifixion.

Jesus heard the cry of the excited multitude, and with awful serenity and force of will he signified his

consent. He would die if he must die, but he would not deny himself. Individuals not of common mould and not dishonest have quailed before the alternative, Truth or Life. It is a tremendous power within a man which can brave the fiercest assaults of intolerance; a power which must have sent its roots deep into the soul and must have taken hold of the entire spiritual nature. A human will unconquered by frowns, by curses, and by all the terrors of death, is clothed with surpassing grandeur, with the truest moral sublimity. The force of character is immense which, when hostility is gathering and deepening and maddening for its last brutal outburst, preserves a man undaunted, prepared to perish, but determined not to cower.

Jesus of Nazareth was able to die, if he must die. He was prepared to offer himself up,—a precious and noble sacrifice; a nature just expanded before the eye of the world; a life in its freshness, vigour, and promise, and fitted for high service to God and man. In uncomplaining silence, in all the dignity of perfect meekness, in the gentlest spirit of love that the world ever beheld, he laid down his life. His soul, calm, humble, meek, and loving, was immovable as a rock. The intolerance of men met in him a force of will not to be overborne. If he must die, he could die, and he did die at the age of thirty-three.

The fact which remains, apart from the earthly causes which brought it about, is this, that Christ acted directly and publicly on the world only for three years, and that he died in comparative youth. Usefulness and power are not measured by length of life. Many old men have never truly lived, and there are early deaths which yet can tell of the richest fruits of living long, and point back to deeds of spiritual prowess and to the origination for others of good that will never die. Perhaps it is to the period of youth, as distinguished from maturer age, that the greatest amount of spiritual power, the strongest impulses, the highest activity and energy belong. Grave counsels, wholesome restraints, sagacious suggestions and modifications issue from the experience of age. But youth has originated all the great movements of the world, and has most largely contributed to the agency by which they have been rendered effective.

He whom Christians recognise as the Redeemer of the World was only a youth. Whether his religion be regarded as a system of doctrines, or as a body of laws, or as a source of extraordinary influences, it is passing strange that he should have died in early life. His brief period of existence afforded no opportunity for maturing anything. In point of fact while he lived he did very little, in the common sense of

doing. He originated no series of well-concerted plans, he neither contrived nor put in motion any extended machinery, he entered into no correspondence with parties in his own country and in other regions of the world, in order to spread his influence and obtain co-operation. Even the few who were his constant companions, and were warmly attached to his person, were not, in his lifetime, imbued with his sentiments, and were not prepared to take up his work in his spirit after he was gone. He constituted no society with its name, design, and laws all definitely fixed and formally established. He had no time to construct and organize, his life was too short; and almost all that he did was to speak. He spoke in familiar conversation with his friends, or at the wayside to passers-by, or to those who chose to consult him, or to large assemblies, as opportunity offered. He left behind him a few spoken truths—not a line or word of writing—and a certain spirit incarnated in his principles, and breathed out from his life, and then he died.

We are not yet entitled to place the youth of Christ, and the other outer conditions of his life, by the side of his public ministry and his personal character. But even here an amazing contrast rises up, which we must suggest for an instant. In the ordinary course of events, the memory of a mere

youth, however distinguished, would soon have utterly perished from among men. But Jesus lives in the world at this moment, and has influenced the world from his death till now. It is no fiction, no mere conjecture, but a fact; an unquestioned, unquestionable fact. There have been multitudes in all the ages since his death, and at this moment, after nearly two thousand years, there are multitudes to whom He is dearer than life. History tells of warriors who reached the summit of their fame in comparative youth; it tells of men of science also, and of scholars, and of statesmen, who in youth rose to great and envied distinction. But the difference is obvious, and it is wide, between the conquest of territory and the conquest of minds: between scientific, literary, or political renown, and moral and spiritual influence and excellence. Is there an instance, not of a man acquiring fame in youth and preserving it in old age, but of a man who died in youth, gaining vast influence of a purely spiritual kind, not by force of arms and not by secular aid in any form, but simply and only by his principles and his life—of such a man transmitting that influence through successive generations, and after two thousand years retaining it in all its freshness, and continuing, at that distance of time, to establish himself, and to reign almighty in the minds and hearts of

myriads of human beings? If there be, or anything approaching to it, where is it? There is not such an example in the whole history of the world, except Jesus Christ.

It is time to remember that we are now only laying the foundation, not constructing the edifice. But this is the foundation, on which it is proposed to rest the argument for the Divinity of Christ. These, with one short addition to be mentioned immediately, were the outer conditions of the life of Christ, under which his public ministry and his personal character reached their destined development. It is not in that development alone, but in that development under these conditions, that the evidence will be found of his True Origin and of his Personal Pre-eminence.

PART III.

THE AGE AND PLACE IN WHICH HE APPEARED.

MORAL CONDITION OF THE AGE — GENTILE WORLD — JUDEA — GALILEE—NAZARETH.

MYTHICAL THEORY — IRRECONCILABLE WITH THE OUTER CONDITIONS OF CHRIST'S LIFE — THESE FACTS NOT MYTHS — NOT FOUNDED ON MESSIANIC IDEAS.

THE circumstances to be introduced here do not need extended notice, but they are too important to be omitted entirely. The age in which Jesus appeared, the nation to which he belonged, and the place where he dwelt while among men, formed an obvious limitation around his earthly life. If there shall be found anything free, and catholic, and world-wide in the affections and purposes of his soul, it must be remembered that he was born a Jew, one of a people who had been long accustomed to overvalue themselves and to undervalue all the rest of the world,— a people who had become notoriously proud, narrow, and intolerant. He appeared, besides, at a peculiar crisis in the history of that people, and indeed of the

world. The testimony of many independent witnesses proves beyond question the awful corruption of manners into which the nations of antiquity had then sunk. It is represented, that the age betrayed a secret consciousness of its own moral condition, and a secret apprehension that some terrible change was approaching. It would be mere pedantry to quote, in proof of this, from Lucian on the one hand, and from Horace, Juvenal, and Persius on the other, passages with which even a moderate scholarship is familiar. And with respect to Judea, the Jewish historian of the times* speaks with unfeigned horror of the moral abominations which then darkened his country as well as the Roman world. But Galilee was disreputable even in Judea, wicked as it was; and even in Galilee, Nazareth was notorious for the ignorance and profligacy of its inhabitants. It is a recorded fact that Christ's connexion with this place, merely as a dweller in it, created a prejudice against him, and attached a stigma to his name. The question was put, as if it contained its own answer, "Can there any good thing come out of Nazareth?"† Jesus spent his life, till he was thirty years of age, amidst the degradation and pollution of this village,

* Joseph. Antiq. Jud. See the detail commencing, Καὶ πρότερον τοῦ τῶν Ἰσιακῶν, κ. τ. λ. lib. xviii. cap. 3. Geneva, 1633.

† John i. 46.

constantly familiar with scenes which were calculated to destroy the seeds of all virtue in his opening soul. It was here, also, in the view of those who had known him from his infancy, that he stood forth, at the end of thirty years, to unfold that character, and to assume and execute that mission, which are now to form the subject of an extended, we hope also an impartial, investigation.

Thus far our task is accomplished; however briefly and hastily, the outer conditions of the life of Christ have been spread before us. And it would be an unpardonable omission, if special attention were not invited to the fact that they are utterly irreconcilable with the vaunted mythical theory. The ablest expositor of this theory, while admitting a certain basis of historical truth in the Christian Gospels, denies altogether their authenticity as histories, and maintains that the Life which they delineate, like the ancient mythologies of Greece and Rome, is fabulous rather than historical. What seem to be facts he pronounces myths, shadowing forth certain spiritual truths, and these he labours to show were the very truths most firmly believed by the nation in connexion with the expected Messiah. His avowed purpose is to prove that by the aid of their imagination the writers of the Gospels wrought up the

scanty materials which they possessed into a series of fables, each containing a spiritual meaning, and that meaning always in harmony with their traditionary ideas, and even suggested by them.

With the utmost confidence we can defy contradiction when we assert that these principles are incapable of being applied to that series of facts which has formed the subject of the short review we have just finished. With whatever plausibility they may be brought to bear upon other parts of the evangelical narrative, it will baffle the most dexterous criticism to adjust them to this portion of it: "The corrupting and debasing influences amidst which Jesus grew up in the village of Nazareth"—"The shortness of his earthly course, and its ignominious close"—"His poverty, his humble trade as a carpenter, and his want of education and of worldly patronage:"—these are the things which we have put forward as the outer conditions of Christ's life. These were not only not in harmony with the Messianic ideas of the Jews at that time, or indeed at any time; they were diametrically opposed to them. We make bold to maintain that they were the very last things which a Jew would ever have dreamed of connecting with the life of his Messiah. They are not Messianic; the most unscrupulous ingenuity can never construe them into myths, or

make them harmonise with national and traditionary fancies. Whatever be fable, these are certainly facts, and would have been eagerly concealed, if they had not been received and undeniable facts; and these facts are all that are now demanded, as the basis on which to found an argument for the true Divinity of Christ.

"Jesus was a resident in the village of Nazareth till he was thirty years of age. He died in comparative youth, when he was only thirty-three years old. He was a working carpenter; poor, unknown, untaught, inexperienced, and unbefriended."

We shall go to some obscure hamlet of our land, known chiefly for the extreme profligacy of its inhabitants—we shall go to the workshop of a carpenter, to a young man at the bench, earning his bread by the labour of his hands, remarkable only because amidst the surrounding vice he has preserved himself uncontaminated—we shall go to this youthful artisan, not yet thirty years of age, born of humble parents, brought up in a condition of poverty, associating only with the poor, in no way connected with the rich, the learned, the influential, or receiving assistance or even countenance from them—we shall go to this poor young man, who has had no intercourse with cultivated society, no access to books, no time for reading and study, no education but the com-

monest, and no outward advantages of any kind above others in his humble station, from his birth till that time—such, in simple historical truth, such exactly was Jesus of Nazareth; and these were the very conditions under which he developed his future character, and rose to his future position!

BOOK THE SECOND.

THE WORK OF CHRIST AMONG MEN.

IN FIVE PARTS.

PART I.—HIS OWN IDEA OF HIS WORK.

II.—COMMENCEMENT OF HIS MINISTRY.

III.—MARKED CHARACTER OF HIS PUBLIC APPEARANCES.

IV.—HIS TEACHING.

V.—THE ARGUMENT FROM HIS WORK TO HIS DIVINITY.

PART I.

HIS OWN IDEA OF HIS WORK.

HIS PUBLIC POSITION, THE ACT OF HIS WILL — HIS CLAIM TO MESSIAHSHIP — HIS IDEA OF MESSIAHSHIP — NOT TEMPORAL, BUT SPIRITUAL — NOT NATIONAL, BUT UNIVERSAL — ALONE IN HIS AGE, HIS COUNTRY, THE WORLD.

IT is a fact that Jesus of Nazareth rose to a position of unrivalled prominence in the eyes of his country. Whether this shall appear to have resulted, according to the natural succession of events, from causes which are at once obvious, or whether it shall be found inexplicable on ordinary principles, the fact itself remains; and no naturalistic, rationalistic, or mythic theory, can expunge it from the record.

Perhaps the broad and startling peculiarities of the age in which Jesus appeared, on the one hand, influenced his mind, and, on the other hand, prepared his countrymen to recognise his assumed position. The great epochs in the history of the world, when it is labouring under some intolerable burden, or heaving with some new and urgent mission just ripe

for development, find for themselves the men equal to their wants. Unwonted results are exhibited, even expected at such times, powers which had never before revealed their existence are drawn forth, and latent attributes of character start into sudden energy at the bidding of extraordinary emergencies. Individuals, in spite of themselves, are elevated to celebrity, or the necessities of the times appeal to some minds so resistlessly, that although uninvited, yet secretly conscious of resolution and energy equal to the crisis, the man feels himself compelled to step forth at once into publicity.

It is certain, that no demand from any quarter was made upon Jesus, to attempt the emancipation of his country and his age. The eyes of the nation were not turned to him; and no party in the nation, perhaps not an individual, was prepared to find a Redeemer in him. The transition from private to public life was spontaneous on his part. The first thought, the matured purpose, and the decisive act, were all entirely his own. He came forth of his own accord—he assumed a public position, and was not compelled, or even invited, or encouraged, to accept it. This was marvellous. We cannot but ask, did it not abash a man in his condition to become, and above all to make himself, an object of universal attention? Did not his want of prepara-

tion and his conscious incapacity for a great public enterprise overwhelm him? Did he not tremble to encounter the caprice of the multitude, the learning, bigotry, and jealousy of the priesthood, and the tyranny and cruelty of the civil rulers? He did not, so far as can be discovered. Without fear, but with no ostentation of courage, Jesus placed himself on an unusual elevation. His entrance into public life, whatever it might mean, and whatever it might involve, was not a foreign suggestion, but a native impulse,—a deliberate purpose of his own; and his own purpose also regulated all his movements throughout. Neither the popular feelings, nor even the wishes of his disciples, nor the current of events, were suffered to govern him, for he repeatedly acted in the face of them all. His own idea from the first was supreme, and his life was a determined realization of that idea, in spite of every opposing force.

The highest end of Christ's mission, whether in his mind or in the evangelic record, is not now the subject of investigation. His entire life, his personal character, and his public labours would require to be spread out; and not only his life, but his death, with all its mysterious meanings; and not only his life and his death, but the subsequent history of himself and his cause would require to be examined, before we could reach even the materials for forming a correct

judgment of his mission, in its wide and holy significance. It is enough at present to know, that he claimed to be The Messiah of the Jews. He repeatedly avowed this claim in plain terms; and it is obvious, on the face of the Gospels, that from first to last, the conviction in his mind, one of the formative and governing principles of his public life, was this, that he was The Messiah.

It is historically certain that at this period the advent of a deliverer was widely expected, and expected with intense enthusiasm. The Gentile world, groaning beneath its burden of darkness and crime, awaited a supernatural redemption; and Judea was tremulous with a hope well defined, and established by the authority of many a sacred text. It was not wonderful that, in a time of universal and high excitement, many unfounded claims should be put forward, and especially that among the Jews pretenders should start up, moved by personal ambition, or patriotism, or religious enthusiasm. Besides, it must not be overlooked that the appearance of John the Baptist, a genuine claimant of religious distinction, whose success at this period was unbounded, was calculated not to repress, but to deepen the aspirations of other susceptible souls. Perhaps in this way, humble as Jesus was, the latent spark of ambition, patriotism, or piety, was kindled up in his breast,

and at last, in that obscure village, he came to hope and believe that he was "the elect of God." But a critical and vital question demands solution here, before we can consent to this interpretation of the origin of his movements. It is this: were the received views of the character and the mission of the Messiah, Christ's views? Had he only caught the spirit of his times? Was he only an embodiment of the popular faith? Was he only a creation, naturally springing up out of sentiments and feelings which had long rooted themselves in the heart of the nation? He was not; but he was diametrically the opposite of all this. His idea had nothing in common with the views and the spirit which were then universal, but was peculiar to himself and perfectly original.

The Jewish Messiah,* in the belief of the Jewish people, was to be a monarch and a conqueror; his kingdom was to be an earthly kingdom, and his glory, gathered first from the conquest, and then from the sovereignty of the whole world, was to be earthly glory. Such a creed, to a youthful heart, must have been powerfully seductive. A throne, a crown, and the empire of a world might well have kindled ambition in the dullest soul. But Jesus of Nazareth

* Channing's Sermon on the Character of Christ, Glasgow edition of Works, p. 425.

never aspired to sovereignty or wealth, or earthly glory of any kind. He collected no armies and no instruments and resources of war; he invaded no territory and assumed no state such as became a warrior or a prince. The idea that the love of conquest, or of the splendours and pomp of royalty, the love of fame or of worldly power, ever had a place in his mind, is utterly destitute of support. It is even in the face of all the evidence. No part of his life, none of his proceedings, and none of his sayings, awaken such a suspicion. "My kingdom is not of this world," he declared to Pontius Pilate: "if my kingdom were of this world, then would my servants fight, that I should not be delivered to the Jews: but now is my kingdom not from hence." * If he had it in his heart to be a king, and he certainly had, it was to be a king not of bodies, but of souls; if he aspired to reign, it was to reign not over men but in them, in their judgments, affections, and consciences. "I am come," he said, "a light into the world." † "To this end was I born, and for this cause came I into the world, that I should bear witness unto the truth." ‡ The only weapon of which he made use was spiritual truth; he did nothing but teach. His life, his words, and all the manifestations of his character are consistent only with the design to achieve, not a

* John xviii. 36. † Ib. xii. 46. ‡ Ib. xviii. 37.

material, but a moral conquest, and to effect, not a political, but a spiritual revolution in the world. He had risen to the conception of a purely spiritual reign, of a palace and a throne for God in the soul, of the regeneration of man's inward nature, and the free and glad restoration of that nature to the unseen, but living and ever-present Father of souls.

We have looked only at one side of the popular faith. Viewed from an opposite side, the originality and individuality of Christ's idea will be still more apparent. The Messiah, in the belief of the Jewish nation, was to be not only a monarch, but emphatically a Jewish monarch; reigning over all the kingdoms of the world, but acknowledging a peculiar relation to the ancient people; his throne in Jerusalem, and his ministers and distinguished servants, Jews. This belief, at a time when they were labouring under a foreign yoke, had become tenfold more dear to them, and every feeling of patriotism was enlisted on its side, in circumstances when, if ever, patriotism is genuine and fervid; not to say that, in this case, patriotism was invested with the sanctity of religion. Last of all, the popular faith harmonised with the deep hereditary contempt of the Jews for the rest of mankind, with their settled persuasion of the distinction which God had made between them and all other nations, and with their long-cherished

anticipations of permanent and undisputed pre-eminence. Nothing can be more clear than that, to oppose a belief so deep-seated, to crush hopes so sacred, to disown the distinction between Jews and Gentiles, and to look with equal favour on both, was to invite unmeasured and relentless hatred, and certain disgrace and defeat. If Jesus had meant to ingratiate himself with his countrymen, his course would have been to sympathise with their creed and their hopes.*

But independently of any personal or public object which he might have in view, how could he have failed to adopt as his own, the faith of his country in this matter? He had been brought up, like others, in all the common views; he must have heard them often from his mother's lips, from grave and pious men also, and especially in the synagogue of Nazareth on the Sabbath days. There is no reason to think that he can have heard anything but the common views, from his infancy upwards. But he had risen, somehow, to a purer and loftier faith, and had formed for himself quite a novel and original idea of the character of the Messiah. "The hour cometh," he said to the woman of Samaria, "when ye shall neither in this mountain, nor yet at Jerusalem, worship the Father; . . . . when the true worshippers shall

* See Whately's Introductory Lessons on Christian Evidences.

worship the Father in spirit and in truth,"* Religion to him, and the bonds of religious fellowship, were not national, but spiritual; connected, not with place or people, but with the state of the mind. He believed in something more dear than country, more dear than even the closest of earthly relationships. "Whosoever shall do the will of my Father who is in heaven, the same is my brother, and sister, and mother."† "They shall come from the east, and from the west, and from the north, and from the south, and shall sit down with Abraham, and Isaac, and Jacob, in the kingdom of heaven."‡ God's kingdom, and his own mission, as he understood them, embraced the world, and were designed, not to confer peculiar distinctions on a single nation, but to originate and diffuse blessings to which all nations alike should be welcome. His idea was catholic, as it was purely spiritual. Born and educated a Jew, associating only with Jews, never beyond the limits of Judea in his life, whence had he derived this idea, whence caught this spirit, how gained this expansion and nobility of soul, how reached this large and lofty and God-like faith?

That poor young man, whose external history we

* John iv. 21—23. † Matthew xii. 50.

‡ Matthew viii. 11, and Luke xiii. 29. See Channing's Sermon as above.

have looked upon, was alone in his country, in his age, in the world! His great soul rose above religious prejudices and errors, and all national, educational, and social influences. He stood forth, not a Jew, but a man, to fulfil a high and purely spiritual mission; embracing not Judea alone, but the wide earth; not one selected tribe, but universal humanity. And was he, then, essentially, nothing more than he seemed to be? Was this possible, in the circumstances, to a mere man? Above all, was it possible to such a man as we have found that Jesus outwardly was?

PART II.

THE COMMENCEMENT OF HIS MINISTRY.

BEGAN WITH THE AGE AND COUNTRY COLLECTIVELY—THEIR CHARACTER—CHRIST, THE INCARNATE CONSCIENCE OF BOTH—HE UNCONSCIOUS OF PERSONAL GUILT—BEGAN BY REBUKING, IN ORDER TO REFORM, THE NATION.

THE marked difference between the views which are now held of the office of teaching, and those which were prevalent in the ancient world, must not be overlooked. Very extended freedom of investigation and of communication was enjoyed in heathen nations by all classes, without distinction. The priesthood were not considered to possess higher rights or powers in this respect than others, and any individual, without violating any law or any established usage, might found a school and promulgate his faith or his scepticism. No restrictive policy, at least as to persons, was sanctioned even in Judea, and even the office of religious teaching was not reserved for the clerical or any other privileged order. There were rabbis, the heads of schools for sacred learning, and

there were also scribes and lawyers, whose business it was to write out copies of the sacred text and to expound its meaning; but they were not necessarily priests, nor of the Levitical tribe. There was nothing in the laws or customs of Judea, to hinder any individual from assuming the office of a religious teacher. It may therefore have excited little surprise, when Jesus began to teach, that he was no priest, or rabbi, or scribe, or lawyer. But it must have struck the men of that generation that he was young, and poor, and unlearned; all the outer conditions of his life were such as to make it wonderful that he should aspire to any public office, and to insure that, if he hazarded the attempt, his presumption would be punished with certain and signal failure.

But the voice of Christ was lifted up, and the world heard; the world hears to this day. In some of the villages of Galilee he first began to speak, to individuals or to small or large assemblages of persons as the circumstances might be. He journeyed throughout Galilee, then throughout the other parts of Judea, and was frequently in Jerusalem preaching and teaching. It is the first tones of his voice which we now seek to catch, the commencement of his ministry which we now seek to observe and interpret. He began to deal with facts rather than with doc-

trines—with this fact especially, that one great era in the world's history was then closing, and another of higher meaning and of brighter promise was then opening upon men. He began by characterising the masses rather than individuals; by depicting the country and the age collectively, and in their broad and prominent qualities. He foretold the speedy doom of things as they then were, and declared that evil, wide-spread and deep-seated, could no longer be endured; and that a radical spiritual revolution was at hand—a kingdom of God, in place of a reign of hypocrisy and formalism. And he taught at the same time that the duty of the age was expressed in one word, repentance; not in the restricted meaning to which custom has reconciled us, but in the sense of an entire and universal change of mind. "Repent," he cried as he commenced his public course; "change your mind, for the reign of heaven is at hand."* He made it known through the length and breadth of the land, that in his judgment, at least, there was demanded an immediate and entire reformation of principles and of manners. Jesus was no panderer to the prejudices and vices of the times in which he lived, or of any favoured class of individuals. He pointed with a faithful hand to the opinions, the habits, the morality, the religion, the worship, the

* Matt. iv. 17.

entire spirit of the age, and pronounced that the condition of things was utterly corrupt and must be revolutionised. The voice of his opening ministry to all classes in the nation was this, "Repent; change your mind, for the reign of heaven is at hand."

It does not rest on his statements only, but on ample historical evidence, that that particular period bore the character of deep hypocrisy and ungodliness. Rigid observance of religious ceremonies was combined with ignorance of religion itself and with an utter destitution of its spirit. Mere superstition was incarnated in the forms and under the name of sanctity. Spiritual worship, the veneration and love of a God of righteousness, purity, truth, and all moral excellence, was almost unknown. There was a magnificent temple, an established worship, an ordained priesthood, a vast and gorgeous ritual, and sacrifices and offerings, and feasts and fasts. There were synagogues open every day, and recognised forms of prayer which were repeated, not only in private, but in the market-places, and at the corners of the streets. It was sought to invest the food, the dress, the looks, the postures of the body with the sacredness of religion; and if such things as these had constituted piety, that age must have been pre-eminently pious. But Jesus declared that true worship is perfectly separable from these things, and

is not essentially connected with any of them, though it may consist along with them all. God looks to the mind alone, to its genuine and unconstrained actings, its reverence, trust, and love. Worship in God's sight is wholly spiritual—always, altogether, only within the soul.

Human virtue was as little understood in that age as Divine worship. A selfish spirit had consumed the heart of all true goodness, not only as between man and his God, but as between man and man. Morality had become an organized hypocrisy, truth and inward excellence empty names, and ritual observances, which contained no homage of the understanding or of the heart, were the veil thrown over unrighteous and impure lives. Jesus proclaimed the sacredness, dignity, and beauty of moral excellence, and that without this there could be no greatness and no worth. He conveyed to the ears of his countrymen some things altogether new, and others he announced with greater clearness and with new authority. The greatness of humility and the dignity of love as taught by him were new, and they were too palpably unwelcome, as well as new, to Gentiles and Jews. The pride, ambition, and covetousness of the human heart, the doctrine of retaliation, and the warlike spirit of the times, were utterly opposed to this teaching. Jesus blessed and honoured the

poor in spirit. He taught that virtue consisted in the patient endurance and the sincere forgiveness of wrongs, and in kindness to the wrong-doer; consisted not in revenge, but in love, genuine good-will—good-will even to enemies. It was then believed—it is still very widely believed—that high self-estimation is essential to dignity of character. Jesus put his hand on the head of a little child and said, "Whosoever shall humble himself as this little child, the same is the greatest in the kingdom of heaven."* Lowliness is greatness, genuine goodness is greatness, child-like obedience to God is greatness. True dignity is a lowly and guileless state of soul. Humbleness of mind, together with rectitude, purity, truth, love of God and good-will to man,—these are the elements of moral grandeur and of the highest spiritual dignity.

Whether or not the ministry of Christ realized at the last what it promised at the commencement, it certainly began with a faithful revelation to that age of its own moral condition. The truest benefactor of any age is he who exposes and expresses it to itself. Self-knowledge is wealth and well-being, the basis of moral reformation and of moral progress, whether to the individual or to the multitude. In this case, conscience, stronger than the pride and

* Matthew xviii. 4.

the blindness of the soul, brings up from the depths within, an image which the man or the multitude fails not to recognise; and the sight of which, though it alarm, corrects and heals. He who shall touch and quicken another's conscience, who shall present the very truth to it, and rouse it to fidelity, performs an invaluable, but a difficult and a hazardous service. And the difficulty and the hazard are incalculably augmented, when we pass from an individual to a nation; for the blindness, the pride, and the perversity of will in this case are beyond measure more inaccessible and invincible. The age, like the man, flatters itself, becomes reconciled by habit to any evil—so reconciled, that at length evil is invested with a kind of sacredness. False shame makes it reluctant to confess and to yield; it is eager to find out excellences, and as eager not to see or to forget faults, until there is at last no eye, no ear, no soul to distinguish that which is wrong. A conscience is needed for the age, as for the individual—a power that shall reveal it to itself, and arouse and convict it. Jesus acted in the outset of his career to the men of his generation—not in promise only, but in fact—the part of the truest friend, and traced out before them in broad and faithful lines their moral likeness, in order that they might recognise themselves. The age in its express lineaments at that

moment, its ignorance, formalism, pride, hypocrisy, and impurity, he held up to itself. For the time, he was an incarnate conscience to the nation, performing that office which each man owed to himself, but would not discharge; and crying to all, in a voice fitted to pierce to the depths of their spiritual nature, "Repent; change your mind, for the reign of heaven is at hand."

Boldness and honesty are not always associated with becoming modesty; and a keen perception of what is wrong in others, is very separable from a quick sensibility to the faults of one's own character. Had this Jesus, we are entitled to ask, no share in the guilt of his country? Admitting that his powers were extraordinary—that he was, as he seemed to be, able to descend below events and manifestations, down to their hidden causes, and to bring up these causes discovered and interpreted—admitting that in his recorded statements no want of comprehensiveness of observation, sobriety of judgment, or impartiality of spirit, can be detected, are we to forget that he himself belonged to the country and to the age which he so unqualifiedly condemned; and have we not a right to ask whether he was not necessarily involved in their guilt? It will be shown hereafter, and it is scarcely denied by any intelligent and candid rejecter of the higher claims of Christianity, that the personal

character of Jesus was unimpeachable; at all events was in point of fact unimpeached. Proclaiming the sins of others, he, so far as the evidence goes, was above suspicion, above charge; and in all his utterances, there is nothing to indicate a sense either of personal guilt or of personal danger. It often appears, in what he says and does, that the spiritual state of others affected his soul with genuine compassion for them, and with deep solicitude for the great cause of God and man; but there is no token either of fear or of shame, on his own account. He seems rather to stand apart, and only to look down upon the facts of a condition in which he had no personal share.

The question imperatively demands an answer — Who was this, whose mode of looking on human affairs and whose feelings were so original, so superior, and who professed to be gifted with such uncommon insight into the moral state of the world, and with such foreknowledge, withal, of its coming destinies? What right had he to pronounce on the spiritual condition and the pressing duty of his country? If it be said, in reply to these questions, that the convictions of his conscience were imperative; it is admitted that there can be no higher authority than conscience, and no higher virtue than to bow implicitly to that authority. But how did it happen

that Christ's conscience alone was clamorous, and that he alone was compelled to speak out? A man distinguished in the Church or the State, venerable by years, of saintly character, and of large and ripened experience, may be allowed to do what would be presumptuous in any other. But this was no gifted, experienced, or distinguished character; no statesman, priest, or venerable sage; but, to all mortal seeming, an inexperienced, uneducated mechanic. The fact is simply this, an obscure youth took it upon himself to be the teacher, reprover, reformer of his country and his age. Was this possible, in the circumstances, to a mere man—above all, was it possible to such a man as we have found that Jesus outwardly was?

PART III.

THE MARKED CHARACTER OF HIS PUBLIC APPEARANCES.

I. SEVERITY — MORAL CONDITION OF PALESTINE — SCENES OF HIS EARLY MINISTRY—SCRIBES AND PHARISEES—FORMALISM AND HYPOCRISY. II. TENDERNESS — INSTANCES AND SOURCE. III. SIMPLICITY—GENERAL CHARACTER OF HIS LIFE — RELATION OF HIS TEACHING TO TIMES, PLACES, AND PERSONS—HIS WORDS AND ILLUSTRATIONS. IV. AUTHORITY—TESTIMONY OF HEARERS—CLAIM TO CONNEXION WITH GOD.

THE individuality of Jesus strongly impressed itself on his whole public life. It gave a unique form, as has just been shown, to the beginning of his ministry, and the same impress, but drawn with deeper lines, was left on his entire course. One of the most marked features of Christ's spirit and manner in public was—

I. The terrible severity with which, although seldom, he exposed and denounced evil. Friendless and powerless as he seemed to be—as in his earthly relations he certainly was—he did not repress on necessary occasions a burning indignation; and if a

voice of thunder was required to awaken and alarm that generation, it was lifted up and resounded through the length and breadth of the land. Supposing the aim of Jesus to have been, as we shall hereafter prove that it was, to plant a spiritual system amongst men—the mightiest obstruction then existing to such a system was the condition of Judea. The minds of the Jews were so proud, so blinded, and so hardened, that until they were thoroughly aroused and convicted, there could be no opening for the entrance of new light and life. It was not of choice so much as from necessity that the preaching of Jesus occasionally took that form, which was a broad exception to its pervading tone, and that with stern severity he rebuked the age in which he appeared. "This is an evil generation"—"an evil and adulterous generation"—"a sinful generation"—"a wicked generation"—"a perverse generation"—"the blood of all the prophets which has been shed from the foundation of the world shall be required of this generation."*

Upon the scenes of his earlier ministrations, he poured forth his indignant yet pathetic warnings—"Woe unto thee, Chorazin! woe unto thee, Bethsaida! for if the mighty works, which have been done in you, had been done in Tyre and Sidon, they would

* Matthew, Mark, and Luke, *passim.*

have repented long ago in sackcloth and ashes. But I say unto you, It shall be more tolerable for Tyre and Sidon at the day of judgment, than for you. And thou, Capernaum, which art exalted unto heaven, shalt be brought down to hell."*

But the objects of his deepest aversion and abhorrence were the Pharisees, lawyers, and scribes, the leaders of the chief sect in that day, the transcribers and interpreters of the Bible. He was strikingly more patient with the Sadducees, the Latitudinarians and free-thinkers of Judea, although he decisively condemned their principles. Even to the convicted and gross violater of the laws of morality, he spoke with wondrous gentleness. But his severity was consuming, when he turned to the high religious professors—the men of stern orthodoxy and of saintly rigour—the admired but unworthy champions of Judaism. Hypocrisy, pretence, hollow semblance, were of old, and they are still, unutterably abhorrent to Christ; and nothing was, or now is, so dear to him as simplicity and sincerity. If there be still, as there were of old, men "who tithe mint and anise and cummin, but neglect the weightier matters of the law, judgment, mercy, and faith," in whom, however fair their exterior, are found not the living principles of religion, but dead dogmas and submis-

* Matthew xi. 21—23.

sion to outward forms, Christianity disowns them as Christ disowned these. The kingdom of God on earth which he announced and founded, is the reign of a real life in the soul, not the adoption with the lips, or even by the judgment, of a set of dogmas, however true, and not outward homage to any set of rites, however significant. The Being with whom we have to do is a Spirit; and his worship is a spiritual and real service. Nothing but truth, pure truth, a living reality in the soul, will answer to the principles and the spirit of the Christian books. Simple reality is everything in this religion—pretence is infamy and crime.

Against hypocrisy, formalism, pretence, Jesus lifted up his voice in the severest tones. "Beware of the leaven of the Pharisees, which is hypocrisy." "Woe unto you, scribes, and Pharisees, hypocrites." "Ye shut the kingdom of heaven against men, and neither go in yourselves nor suffer them that are entering to go in." "Ye love greetings in the market-places, and the uppermost rooms at feasts, and the chief seats in the synagogues." "Ye bind heavy burdens on men's shoulders, but ye yourselves will not touch them with one of your fingers." "Ye devour widow's houses, and for a pretence make long prayers." "Ye compass sea and land to make one proselyte; and when he is made, he is tenfold more

the child of hell than before." "Ye cleanse the outside, but within ye are full of extortion and excess." "Ye strain at a gnat, and swallow a camel." "Ye blind guides." "Oh, fools, and blind." "Whited sepulchres, outwardly ye appear righteous, but within ye are full of hypocrisy and iniquity." "Ye serpents, ye generation of vipers, how shall ye escape the damnation of hell?"* How withering, how blasting, must such words have been from such lips! But imagine a young man, outwardly conditioned as Jesus had hitherto been and at this moment actually was, equal to such thinking and such daring, and still more tolerated for an instant in uttering such words —and all the while to be no other and no more than he seemed to be! It is impossible.

It must not be forgotten that severity in Christ was exceptional and occasional, as it was terrible. It was awakened only towards certain aspects of the age, and certain classes of character. Another and quite opposite attribute pervaded and distinguished his official life—the attribute of

II. Tenderness. The great lights of the world, brilliant but cold, have not often reflected much of this gentle virtue. Philosophers and sages have deemed susceptibility of heart unbecoming their character and vocation. A gifted and God-sent man,

* Matthew xxiii. 13—33.

it is thought, must be superior to all the tenderer and softer impulses of ordinary human nature; and it is found, in fact, that when men imagine they are appointed to act in God's name, they at once assume a sort of holy isolation, and crucify the common feelings and sympathies which bind them to their fellow-creatures. They speak down to humanity, instead of standing on its level, and mingling in its sorrows and its joys.

The life of Jesus Christ is full of incidents that reveal surpassing tenderness of heart. As he journeyed to Jerusalem, when he drew near to the city, he wept over it, and said, "If thou hadst known, even thou, at least in this thy day, the things that belong to thy peace; but now they are hid from thine eyes!" On another occasion, he thus bewailed while he rebuked the doomed capital, "O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, which killest the prophets and stonest them that are sent unto thee, how often would I have gathered thy children together, as a hen doth gather her chickens under her wings, but ye would not!"* At the last, this city was distinguished by a singular act of his grace; and when he commanded his disciples to "preach repentance and remission of sins among all nations," he added, "beginning at Jerusalem."† Of the same character was the merciful notice of that dis-

* Luke xiii. 34, and xix. 42. † Ib. xxiv. 47.

ciple who, in the hour of trial, had disowned and deserted him. The first words which Jesus spoke when he again met this fallen man were admonitory, but gracious: "Simon, son of Jonas, lovest thou me?" * Among the multitudes who followed him to Calvary were certain women, to whom he turned, and said, "Daughters of Jerusalem, weep not for me, but for yourselves and for your children." † Bethany recalls the image of a friendship, as genial and as touching, as ever grew on this earth. Jesus loved Martha, and Mary, and Lazarus. Lazarus fell sick and died. Jesus came to the house of mourning, and, amidst the desolation and anguish of the loving hearts there, he "groaned in spirit, and was troubled;" he followed the sisters to the grave, and, when he saw them weeping, and their friends also weeping, "Jesus wept." ‡ Once, as he sat at table in a Pharisee's house, a woman, who was a sinner, prostrated herself in his presence, and bathed his feet with her tears and wiped them with her hair. She was spurned by the Pharisee; but Jesus said, "Her sins, which are many, are forgiven her; for she hath loved much." § Once, when he happened to be in the temple, the Pharisees brought to him a woman convicted of a mortal crime. He addressed an indirect rebuke to

* John xxi. 15.
† Luke xxiii. 28.
‡ John xi. 35.
§ Luke vii. 47.

them, which compelled them to retire with shame; and then, turning to the guilty woman, he said, "Where are those thine accusers? Doth no man condemn thee? . . . Neither do I condemn thee; go, and sin no more." * Singularly gracious, forgiving, and loving was that voice which once was heard in the temple and the streets of Jerusalem, and which often woke up the echoes on the shore of the Lake of Galilee. It has long since died away, but not the living force of love which inspired it. That yet lingers in the ancient words which survive to this day.

III. Simplicity marked the public appearances of Christ. He was perfectly unaffected and inartificial. It will be difficult to find in the Gospels even a seeming indication of disingenuousness on his part. No latent wish was in his heart to conceal any circumstance connected with his origin, his past history, or his present position, from the fear that it might be unfavourable to his reputation and success. There was nothing in him like manœuvring, desire to create impression, gain influence, and produce effect. Men who are really great, or who would be thought great, sometimes contract eccentric habits, adopt a peculiar mode of living, select some wild and strange abode, affect a singular dress or manner or look or tone of voice; but we shall search in vain for such

* John viii. 10, 11.

extravagances in him. He affected no singularity, assumed no consequence; his dress, his mode of living, and his speech continued to be, to the last, those of the common people. He appeared before his countrymen simply as he was and had always been, not at all solicitous to adapt either his history or his modes to his altered position.

Christ had no particular building, like the Jewish doctors, or the heathen philosophers, where he delivered his instructions; no Lyceum, grove, portico, or hall; and he had no fixed days and hours for unfolding the different branches of his system. The ancient sages were accustomed to distinguish their public from their private prelections. Some things they uttered freely to all who applied to them; but there were others which they reserved for the initiated—doctrines peculiarly profound or peculiarly sacred, and which required a long preparatory course before they could be appreciated and adopted. Perhaps this was a legitimate method of awakening interest and securing power; perhaps it was even necessary; certainly its effect was to create a vast amount of influence and to maintain in the public mind a high idea of the resources and the wisdom of these sages. But Jesus spoke the same things to his disciples and to the people generally—to the few and the many. Whatever the character of his in-

structions might be, they were indifferently addressed to any sort of persons, anywhere, at any time. The most striking thoughts might be disclosed to a single individual—a member of the Sanhedrim or a poor woman of Samaria,—or to many thousands in one assembly, or in a private house as he sat at table, or when he was walking, or when he was sitting wearied by Jacob's Well, or on a mountain, or in the plain, or on the shore of a lake, or from a fishing boat, or in a synagogue, or in one of the cloisters of the Temple; but always, simply as the occasion offered, without contrivance, without manœuvre or underhand motive.

Christ composed no formal discourses, delivered no carefully constructed orations, but always spoke perfectly natural, making use of the commonest objects and incidents for illustration, just because they were near and easily understood, and free to all. The lily, the corn-seed, the grain of mustard, the birds of the air, the falling of a tower, the rain, the appearances of the sky, these and the like gave occasion for the utterance of high and imperishable ideas. And the language in which these ideas were uttered was the language of the common people. No severe philosophical style did he adopt, no scientific formulæ did he introduce, no new terminology did he create, no rigid dialectic method did he pur-

sue, no high and hard abstractions and no close and elaborate argumentation did he affect. He conveyed his instructions in the most unpretending and informal manner, and in the commonest and simplest words. He owed literally nothing to phraseology, to modes, to circumstances. Whatever influence he acquired and whatever power he exerted, it was owing to simple reality; in no degree to management, pretence, tact, or show. He did nothing—nor ever seemed to wish—to suggest an idea for which there was not an actual basis, or to make the idea seem any other than the actual basis sustained. In his manner, his words, and his acts, he was simply real, not more, not less, no other than he showed himself to be,—so far, that is to say, as respected his earthly relations, for with them only we have to do here. He was pure, unaffected, inartificial reality,—his disciples maintain, the only perfectly simple reality that ever alighted on this earth.

Simplicity is true greatness, it is moral nobility, and reveals a nature too pure and too genuine to endure deception or pretence. But was this likely to have been the taste, or if the taste, the attainment of Jesus of Nazareth, had he been no more and no other than his external life disclosed?

Blending with the attribute of simplicity there was a mysterious

IV. Authority, which marked the public appearances of Christ. Those who listened to him often testified that "his word was with power."* "The people were astonished at his teaching, for he taught as one that had authority, and not as the scribes."† They questioned one another, saying, "Whence hath this man this wisdom?"‡ On one occasion certain officers sent by the Pharisees to apprehend him were arrested by his voice as he taught, were unable to execute the order, and returned, saying, "Never man spake like this man."§ Whether it was an indefinable air of hidden majesty about his whole appearance, or his calm and earnest voice, or the depth and force of what he said, there was left on the minds of all who listened to him an impression of power more than human, which they found it impossible to resist. Perhaps the origin of this impression, at least in part, admits of some further explanation. In addition to any singularity in his ideas or in his manner of conveying them, there were certain forms of expression which he was in the habit of using, which were most startling and mysterious. This young man, from a remote and disreputable village, who had spent his life in manual labour, and had only lately appeared in public, not only claimed to possess an intimate

* Luke iv. 32. † Matthew vii. 29.
‡ Matthew xiii. 54. § John vii. 46.

acquaintance with spiritual truth, but spoke in a way in which even the prophets of Israel had never dared to speak. His frequent style of address to his countrymen was this: "Verily, verily, I say unto you." "Ye have heard that it hath been said by them of old time . . . . . but I say unto you."* "Whatsoever ye shall ask in my name, that will I do unto you."† "I appoint unto you a kingdom."‡ "Come unto me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you and learn of me, and ye shall find rest to your souls."§ We offer no interpretation of these expressions at present, and we found no argument on what may be conceived to be their natural import. It is enough that they were uttered, and that they must have contributed to that impression which we have seen was felt so strongly by all who listened to Christ. With or without such passages, it is certain that an extraordinary authority and power accompanied his words; and unless we add this element, we shall fail to reach a true conception of what his appearances in public actually were.

Aided, then, by the general views at which we have now arrived, let us thoughtfully follow Jesus in his wanderings through Galilee and Judea, and look

* Matthew v. 41.
† John xiv. 13.
‡ Luke xxii. 29.
§ Matthew xi. 28, 29.

upon him in the village and the city, on the mountain-side and the lake, surrounded by a small and select company, or by a vast mixed multitude. Recalling all the facts of his early history and his outward condition, up to the moment when he entered on his public course, our interest, even anxiety, cannot but be profound. What is there,—we try to satisfy ourselves as we ask,—what is there in his general spirit and manner as a public man, to distinguish him from others? Not regarding at present either the subjects which he selects, or his method of treating them, we ask, what is the general impression left on the mind, of his qualities as a teacher? Are there manifest signs of his origin and previous condition, marks of servility and timidity, traces even of coarseness and vulgarity, evident proofs of inexperience and youth? There are not. On the contrary, while Jesus always speaks with transparent honesty, we find among the qualities that specially marked him, now a terrible severity, and again more frequently a surpassing tenderness, as if his soul were a deep fountain of compassion for man; now an unaffected simplicity, in appearance, in language, and in manner, and again a power more than human, irresistible by those that listened to him.

And was this verily a young man just taken from the carpenter's workshop, uneducated, inexperienced,

and friendless? It was. But if so, was he only this and no more?

A more decisive reply to this question, and from a higher region of thought than we have yet ascended, may perhaps be found. Christ's teaching itself may convert into certainty, the conjecture which even his marked qualities as a teacher suggest. The words that fell from him, the spiritual doctrines which he revealed, may throw fresh light on his origin, and irresistibly lift our faith above the mere outward history which belonged to him. The inquiry, at all events, is worth whatever pains can be bestowed upon it, and it must be conducted with candour and with patience.

PART IV.

HIS TEACHING.

IN FOUR CHAPTERS.

CHAP. I.—PRELIMINARY GENERAL VIEWS.

II.—THE SOUL.

III.—GOD.

IV.—RECONCILIATION OF THE SOUL AND GOD.

CHAPTER I.

PRELIMINARY GENERAL VIEWS.

RECORD OF CHRIST'S TEACHING—NO FORMAL ACCOUNT OF IT—MIND OF CHRIST, SOLE FOUNTAIN OF GOSPELS—SUMMARY OF HIS TEACHING—REIGN OF GOD ON EARTH—"KINGDOM OF HEAVEN." ETC.

THE medium through which the teaching of Christ is presented to the world, is very singular in its character. His disciples cannot appeal to any work from the hand of their Master, constructed for the purpose of giving a full and systematic exposition of his doctrines. Nor did the Master, in default of such a work from his own hand, select for this high task one of the most gifted of those who were attached to his person, and prepare him by a special course of instruction for accomplishing the task with success. The Arabian prophet committed, to writings dictated by himself, those views which he wished should be connected with his name. The writings of Epictetus, Seneca, and the later Stoics, yet extant, contain a full exhibition of the ethical and divine philosophy of that remarkable school. Socrates has found histo-

rians and expositors of his peculiar teaching in two of the most accomplished and able of his disciples, Xenophon and Plato. Even the Chinese patriarch, Confucius, who lived long prior to the captivity of the Jews in Babylon, left in his own writings—if the opinion of competent scholars may be relied on—an authentic account of the principles and laws which he sought to establish amongst his countrymen. But there is no book by Christ himself or by any of his disciples, devoted to a formal and extended exposition of his personal teaching. Our knowledge of this must be gathered from a few set discourses and a few parables, from private conversations, and from incidental remarks; which discourses and parables and conversations and remarks are scattered, manifestly without any rigid regard to order, over the narrative of a life itself full of intense interest. This narrative, again, is presented in four different parts by four different hands at different periods. Each of these parts, as might be expected, contains much which is also found in the others; and if all repetitions were expunged, the entire record of Christ's life would be reduced to a few pages. Within this small compass, and forming only a little part of it, lie the whole of the materials which make up the only account which has come down to us of the substance of Christ's personal teaching.

It is not to be expected, under all these disadvantages, that a public life extending over no more than three years can have sent down to the world a legacy of spiritual truth, at all to be compared with what the world has received from other quarters. Such an expectation is the very last which could enter the mind of one who, for the first time, without prepossession and without previous information, should look into the Gospels. What can a mere youth, a poor, uneducated, inexperienced, and friendless Galilean mechanic, have said to the world, at all deserving the world's attention? Let us hear! if with caution, also with impartiality.

It must be distinctly understood in the outset, that whatever spiritual truths are embodied in the Gospels, their authorship shall here be attributed without scruple to Jesus of Nazareth. It was intimated at an earlier stage of the investigation, that there was incomparably greater difficulty in supposing that the Christ of the Gospels was an ideal creation, existing nowhere but in the minds of such men as the Evangelists, than in supposing that they had only represented a real living being, and were able to represent him in the manner they have done, because they had actually seen him. The argument is the same in kind, which we now apply to a particular department of the life of Christ. It is every

way more natural and less difficult to conceive, that such men as the Evangelists were merely record what they had actually heard from the lips of Jesus, than to imagine that the ideas which they express were the growth of their own minds. It may be assumed, as beyond any reasonable doubt, that the fountain of all the spiritual truths contained in the Gospels was the mind of Jesus Christ.

What, then, are the great, leading ideas clearly and undeniably taught in the Gospels? Without attaching importance to every word and every occasional expression, without straining and forcing the language, and contending for all which it might be possible to prove lies in them, we seek now to give prominence only to so much as, it cannot be doubted by any dispassionate reader, they contain.

We enter on this investigation with a feeling of deep solemnity and with conscious singleness of purpose, seeking not to exaggerate in anything, but rather to understate the results of impartial inquiry, and desirous that whatever is here asserted, respecting the substance of Christ's teaching, should be severely tested by an appeal to the gospels themselves.

It could serve no good purpose to notice all the subjects of secondary importance on which the mind of Christ may have been incidentally expressed. His views of civil society, of the relative duties of

rulers and subjects, of poverty and wealth, and of the two conditions of human beings represented by these opposite names; his counsels, marked by deep sagacity and unbending principle, uttered in many various circumstances, addressed to his disciples, to single individuals, or to classes of persons; his inculcation of duties religious, civil, social, personal; his faithful warnings to the unthinking, the insincere, the vicious; his words of sympathy and consolation to the afflicted and desponding—all these may be passed by without injury to the argument. Leaving them, therefore, we shall attempt to produce, as faithfully and succinctly as we can,

A Summary of Christ's Teaching.

One who for the first time should intelligently examine the Christian gospels, could not fail to be struck with the idea manifestly underlying their whole extent, and often lifted up into singular prominence, of a Universal Spiritual Reign, by the name of "the kingdom (or reign) of God"—"the kingdom (or reign) of heaven." Such a man would certainly reach the conviction, that Jesus taught in a very unpretending, but at the same time a very intelligible manner, that the human race, without distinction of Gentile and Jew, were destined to the highest

spiritual elevation, of which their nature and their condition on earth admitted. The noticeable fact is, that the youthful Galilean carpenter was alone in this teaching, and that no other mind before had risen to such views of the destiny of man on earth. Eighteen hundred years ago this divine thought first became a living word among men, and it has never perished since, and the world at this day is only labouring to work out the old idea of the gospels. Conflicting theories of human progress,—of the emancipation of man's intellect and heart,—of his deliverance from ignorance, error, vice, and suffering, —and of the advancement of knowledge and freedom, and individual and social happiness, find their root here. The first conception is due to the mind of Jesus Christ, and in his teaching the conception is presented, not vaguely and confusedly, but with luminous precision. It is the reign of God in men, when the Father of minds shall be known, loved, and revered by his children. It is the reign of righteousness, purity, truth, love, and peace, the universal reception and dominion among men of all true, just, holy, generous, and divine principles. It is the highest stage of religious, moral, intellectual, social, and individual cultivation. It is the noblest development possible on this earth of all the attributes and capabilities of humanity. It is spiritual victory after

the battle of thousands of ages. It is the triumph of good and of God over moral and physical evil! The idea originated with Christ, was matured in his mind, and was freely imparted in his teaching. His soul, during its sojourn below, bestowed this imperishable thought and kindled this inextinguishable hope. He first cast this immortal germ, "the seed of the kingdom," into the bosom of the earth: what produce it shall yield, the world is yet waiting to behold.

The doctrine of a universal spiritual reign lays open to us another, with which it stands closely connected: that the great battle of the world and of all time is with sin; not with suffering so much as with that which is the cause of all suffering,—with moral evil, the root and source of physical evil. The Christian gospels are distinguished by the frequent and vivid representation of sin, as a deep and deadly evil in the heart, as voluntary departure from rectitude, from purity, from truth, from love,—in one word, from God, separation from Him in thought, affection, and will. Particular crimes, falsehood, impurity, revenge, avarice, ambition, and the like, are sometimes singled out for special reprehension; but, more frequently, the parent source of crime in all its forms is declared and exposed. The greatness of the evil stands out with appalling distinctness; its debasing

and polluting nature also, and its plague-like power of self-propagation and perpetuation. In the teaching of Christ, sin is an undoubted and awful reality, the bitter cause of all that afflicts and crushes the world, the death of the human body, the perdition of the human soul.

The forgiveness of sin is as real in the gospels as its existence and its atrocity. The doctrine appears in a more expanded form in the Apostolic letters; and there its nature, its basis, and its limitations are stated with greater variety of language, and its different aspects are set forth by a multitude of figures borrowed from the ancient Jewish worship. But its importance and truth are clearly taught in the words of Christ. The nature of God, the perfections of his Being, and his relation to his earthly creatures, are so exhibited as to render forgiveness sure and clear as sunlight. He who is true and just and holy is also ineffably gracious: the burdened soul, crying for emancipation from evil, and trusting in God, has perfect assurance of pardon. The foundations of this fact yet wanted a flood of light which the Cross was to pour down upon them, and it was to be made yet more manifest how necessary and how glorious a thing God deemed it to be to forgive sin, and how intensely, how infinitely interested he was in this issue. But the certainty of forgiveness from God—

unlimited and free forgiveness—was lifted up on high, one of the divinest lights in the public life of Jesus.

Pardon of sin, not as a doctrine merely, or even as an object of hope, but as an experience, a fact realized in the soul, supposes the reunion of man with God, and is the living germ of all spiritual excellence. The first necessity of man is the recognition of the highest of all his relations, his relation to God; the parent virtue is faith, faith in the being of God, in His character and His government.

There arises the doctrine of Providence, connecting every moment of our earthly life and every event with the Supreme Power and with an invisible world. It is seen, that there are vast spiritual laws which overspread and enwrap the universe; sin is perdition, holiness is salvation. These laws are in harmony with the will of God, but they are eternal and immutable in themselves; not arbitrary appointments, not originated by God, but founded in the unchangeable nature of things. These laws are what they are, by necessity, and never were and never can be other than they are. Amidst the sway of these eternal laws, guiding their administration and reigning supremely over all, is the great God. Spiritual providence is His government of the world by these laws and in the exercise of all His infinite attributes.

It is universal, minute, unslumbering: it is wise, it is holy, it is merciful: it is for, not against, the good; always for the good; putting down evil, protecting, nourishing, helping everything that is good; bringing forth the largest amount of good with the smallest possible admixture of evil. It is terrible only to evil, it invites to reliance and hope.

The doctrine of Prayer harmonizes with that of Providence. It rests on the fact of our dependence on God, on the belief of our intimate connexion with the invisible world, and on the deep longing for spiritual communion which springs from the conviction, that God is to us the most real and the most near of all beings. Prayer is not an instrument for altering the purposes or moving the heart of God, or for procuring the suspension of the ordinary course of nature; but it is one of the natural modes in which piety utters itself, in which it needs, for its own sake, to utter itself. It is a part of worship, one of the proper forthgoings of the created to the uncreated mind. True worship is within the soul. Whatever be its separate acts and its outward manifestations, its essence and its place are wholly spiritual. It is knowledge, veneration, trust, love!

Piety towards God is the basis of all moral excellence; and on this basis, a noble pile of virtues is erected in the teaching of Jesus. Common and

acknowledged excellences, integrity, truthfulness, purity, temperance, justice, find their due place here; but, in addition to these, there are elements here, either altogether or almost unknown elsewhere, —humility, meekness, forgivingness, self-denial, love to enemies. It is not only taught that we should love others as we love ourselves, and do to them as we would have them do to us, but it is inculcated that the reigning principle in the soul must be a universal and genuine good-will, a deep desire to produce happiness, to put down evil, and to do only good to every living being. Our enjoyments, possessions, and immediate interests, everything except our piety and virtue, must yield to this spirit of love. No evil conduct in any being, no personal wrongs we have suffered at his hands, must be allowed to extinguish the desire to bless even him. We are commanded to requite evil with good, and to love our enemies. Virtue is the burning and deep desire, cherished, in spite of everything, to do only good; it is sacrifice and service for others. The life of Christ, his disciples assert, with what truth we may be better able hereafter to judge, was a perfect realization of his teaching, an extended act of sacrifice and service, the living image on earth of the love of the invisible God. The Divine nature is love; eternal, infinite desire to spread blessedness. Jesus proclaims

that human virtue in its foundation and its essence is represented by one word, love; love to God and love to man; not a mere emotion, effeminate and enervating, a sign and a cause of weakness, but an enlightened, masculine, resolute, and supreme regard to the rights of God, and to the true interests of our fellow-beings. He proclaims that this is the end of rational existence, the dignity, strength, and joy of the rational nature. This end reached, man is God-like, a partaker of the Divine nature, recreated in the image of his Almighty Father.

Genuine, glowing, profound regard to God and to man is described as a Divine life in the human soul, an undying spark from the eternal fire, which, once enkindled, is never extinguished. The origin of this Divine life, its supports, conflicts, and varying manifestations, are set forth with simplicity and power. Spiritual truth is shown to be the aliment of the spiritual nature, "living bread," of which if a man eat he shall hunger no more; "living water," of which if a man drink he shall thirst no more. Spiritual truth, understood, chosen, adopted into the mind and incorporated with it, is the priceless good; it is blessedness, freedom, power, and wealth; it is pure, exalted, imperishable treasure.

It cannot be overlooked that we have here in a new form the idea which at the first we found to be

the most prominent in the gospels, "a reign of God in the soul of man." The working out of this idea, in one or other of its forms, occupied the entire personal ministry of Christ. He lived for this, and for this he died, not to promulgate only or to predict, but actually to found, a reign of righteousness, purity, truth, love, and peace, a spiritual kingdom of God among men.

The rapid and condensed view of the teaching of Christ which has been presented, may be sufficient to help us to form a general conception of its character; but much more extended and particular acquaintance with it is required, for the purpose which we contemplate here. It is necessary to enter largely into detail, and to examine, separately and fully, at least the leading subjects of Christ's public ministrations. With this view, we now turn to the three great doctrines which are announced in the gospels;—The doctrine of the Soul, the doctrine of God, and the doctrine of the Reconciliation of the Soul and God.

CHAPTER II.

OF THE SOUL.

IN TWO SECTIONS.

SECTION I.—THE SOUL'S REALITY AND GREATNESS.

II.—THE SOUL'S ACCOUNTABILITY AND IMMORTALITY.

SECTION I.

THE SOUL'S REALITY AND GREATNESS.

IGNORANCE OF MATTER AND SPIRIT—IDEA OF SOUL, INTUITIVE —UNIVERSAL INDIFFERENCE TO SOUL—JESUS REVEALS IT—NO FORMAL PROOF—HIS TEACHING BASED ON IT—ORIGIN OF SOUL —ATTRIBUTES—GOSPELS TEACH ITS UNUTTERABLE WORTH— DETERMINES MAN'S PLACE IN SCALE OF BEING.

ON the threshold of this subject we are arrested by the humiliating necessity of confessing ignorance. That which formed one of the high themes of Christ's teaching, the soul, is absolutely and necessarily unknown, so far as respects its distinctive essence. At the same time, the ignorance thus confessed is not peculiar to this region of thought; for that which we call Matter, though it be immediately and constantly present to our senses, is as little understood as that which lies beyond the reach of sense, and which we call Spirit. Is there, then, any real distinction between the two? is there, in the nature of man, an actual element answering to the word spiritual, a something distinct from the material organization, and higher than it? This is the

question which has burdened and troubled the ages; and, up to this day, the only reply to it which at all satisfies the reason, and furnishes ground for an enlightened trust, is that which finds in the soul itself its own proper evidence. The spirituality of man we hold to be a primitive truth, an original intuition, which the same mighty hand that formed our nature at the first planted within it and made an integral part of it. Whether the appeal be made by each individual to his own consciousness, or whether he take the wider range of his personal observation, or whether he search into the history of nations; whether he limit investigation to his own times, or extend it back into the past ages, the conclusion just named is the only one which finally commends itself as legitimate and consistent. One thing is certain; the reasonings of the past ages, apart from intuition, have not conducted men to a clear, uniform, and decisive result. The region has proved too profound, and too dark for feeble and limited beings to explore; and the human intellect has returned from the search after evidence, bewildered and oppressed. At the same time, justice demands the confession that the intuitional proof is by no means, in all respects, unexceptionable. It is extremely difficult to reach the very voice of human nature, as it is constituted by God, and to

read the native, spontaneous verdict of the soul, in reference to itself. There are most painful discrepancies and confusions, and the testimony admits of being wofully corrupted and even altogether suppressed.

The fact is not to be denied, that the nations and the ages have not agreed, and do not now perfectly agree, on the ground of intuition, any more than on the ground of general reasoning, in one energetic response to the question of the soul's reality, as distinct from the material organization. We cannot shut our eyes to the reckless scepticism of some, and to the sensualism and moral debasement of many more; nor, on the other hand, to the tokens without number of laborious but fruitless speculation, of deep but unsatisfied longings, of dark conjectures, and of torturing fears. The light kindled by God in the soul has had to struggle for its preservation and its purity. The voice of man's nature has come up amidst the clamour of other and hostile sounds. That voice has not been listened to; sometimes it has been so long unheeded, that at length it has ceased to make itself heard at all. Even where it has been distinctly recognised, men have shrunk back from the difficulties and the mysteries to which it seemed to conduct. The idea of a spirit inhabiting the body is hard to be understood; the

origin of the spirit, the nature of its connexion with the body, its laws and its destinies, all are mysterious and abstruse. It is much more easy to believe that man is what the senses teach concerning him, and no more; it is even more agreeable, on some accounts, to believe only this, and it becomes ever more agreeable as the mental and especially the moral condition deteriorates. Faith in anything beyond the senses becomes more and more unwelcome and unlikely, and at last is morally impossible.

Without consulting the history of remote ages and of distant lands, our own times will supply evidence sufficiently extended on this subject, and our own country will furnish instances the counterpart of which, we need not doubt, are to be found in all other regions of the earth. Amongst ourselves, there are men who scarcely know that they have a soul. A faint echo of the Divine voice does indeed still linger in these sunken natures, and it may never be absolutely impossible to awaken them and to make them catch the dying sound; but virtually they live on, as if that voice had never been uttered, and as if no echo of it trembled within them. From their birth upward, they have put forth no faculties but those of their bodies, and have conversed only with the objects of sense. The

external world alone—the labours, interests, attractions, duties, and wants which belong to it—has successfully appealed to them. There has been everything to deaden the sense of a higher nature, little to awaken and stimulate it. The struggle to provide for daily necessities, and still more the indulgence of low sensual appetites and confirmed habits of vice, have rendered everything connected with a spiritual world uncongenial and alarming. In this way, multitudes amongst us are scarcely ever disturbed by the thought, that they have a soul. They think only of the body and of the outward world, and are utter strangers to their rational and responsible nature and to their solemn destiny. They have lost all sense of the dignity, the duties, the power, and the worth which belong to them. The very first necessity of human beings in this condition is to know themselves.

Jesus came to the world to meet this necessity, at a time when the soul was awfully unknown. An age of marvellous intellectual activity, of high cultivation, and of abundant produce, of its kind, scarcely believed in the soul. A few of the more privileged and gifted natures, a few wise and earnest men, longed for inward light, and they found it in measure; but to the world generally the soul was almost unknown. Even in Judea, gross materialism

had darkened and enervated religion. It seemed to be imagined that the service of God required no intellect, no conscience, no heart, no spiritual nature, but only eyes, hands, lips, features of the countenance, movements of the body. To Jews and Gentiles, the soul in its real greatness, in its noble attributes, in its vast capacities, and in its high destinies, was practically unknown. There was needed, if not a revealer of what was new, a restorer of what had long been all but lost, a quickener of what lay dead and buried.

But who shall stand forth to tell to man, that he has a soul? Who shall redeem the birthright so vilely cast away, and lift up in the sight of all nations the forgotten, forsaken, dishonoured mind? Who shall read aloud the handwriting of God on the nature of man, restore the text once so fairly inscribed, and clear it from all false glosses, all various readings, all mistakes and blots? Who shall give back to the world the Divine original, after the interpolations and corruptions of a thousand ages? Jesus of Nazareth has done nothing less than this. In His teaching may be found the reality, the greatness, the accountability, and the endless life of the soul, revealed with a luminousness and a fulness for which we look in vain elsewhere.

There is no formal exposition in the recorded sayings of Christ of the doctrine of the soul, its origin, its nature, its union with the body, its powers, its laws, and its fate. None of these forms the subject of elaborate argumentation, or of brilliant discussion. There is no array of evidences on the one hand, and no enumeration and refutation of errors on the other hand. Proof is never attempted. Jesus spoke to men, as if he knew that they did not need proof, and that they already had within them the highest proof, of which the subject admitted. He spoke of the soul, as a truth ascertained and indisputable, which men had wickedly excluded from their minds. He spoke like one whose office was, to announce that of which they ought not to have been ignorant, and to remind them of that which they ought never to have forgotten. His method was direct appeal to the spiritual nature—clear, solemn appeal, in a matter of which he left themselves to be the judges. His ministry was a proclamation, in all places, circumstances, and connexions, of the doctrine of the soul. This doctrine lies underneath all his teachings; or is closely interwoven with them, is directly suggested by them, often conspicuously stands out from them. He is resolved, that the world shall know and believe that there is a spiritual as well as a material

nature in man, an invisible, precious part of his being, and that the forgotten mind is a profound, a universal reality. All times, all nations, all conditions, rich and poor, bond and free, alike are distinguished in this respect; it is the birthright of all, the common inheritance of man. The reality of the soul was involved in His doctrine of a reign of God; in that of sin and that of pardon; in that of religion, since its place and its essence alike are spiritual; in that of prayer and that of worship; in that of piety towards God, and in that of human virtue. His entire teaching rests on the basis of man's spiritual nature, and, without this, would be utterly unmeaning. His ministry was a voice to the world, on behalf of the soul, familiarising the lost idea, and pleading for its restoration.

The mechanism of the body is curious and mysterious, the earth around and the skies above are full of wonders, the present life has its interests, attractions, and noble uses; but there is that within man to which, not in the frame of the body, nor in the structure of the visible creation, nor in the mechanism of the present life, any resemblance can be found. Christ's voice proclaimed the soul; and amidst the degradation, the profound torpor, and the guilty self-abandonment of the world, the sound was renewed and prolonged, The soul! the soul! And that, whose being

was thus heralded, merited this glory, for it was, it is, in itself truly great. Its origin exalts it marvellously. The offspring of God, and bearing in it the sign of its Divine Parentage, it is great. Its attributes, incomparably higher than any which reside in matter, make it great. Its vast capacities, and, most of all, its immortal destiny, make it great. In the gospels, the soul is often contrasted with the body and the things of earth, and lifted up above them all. The words of Jesus are framed, to convey to the bosom of man a solemn assurance, and to create a deep conviction of his unutterable worth. As a matter of fact, they have done this in the most unpromising circumstances, and have effected what all other agency fails to effect. The ignorant, the uncultivated, and the vicious have been taught by them to reverence themselves, and to recognise the sacredness of their own being. In the teaching of Christ, the soul is the man, and determines his position in the scale of existence; not the body, not outward possessions, not social rank, not anything visible, not anything connected only with the present world; but the spiritual nature, its powers, principles, and moral condition. The soul is the man; in it are all his real distinctions, all his worth, his dignity, and his happiness; there lies his character in the universe, there his whole being for good or for evil—there and nowhere else. The gospels do not

assist us in defining and comprehending the essence of spirit, or in solving the hard questions of metaphysics respecting the connexion between matter and mind, how the latter acts upon and through the former, and is in turn constantly affected by it. But they have filled the world with a most blessed sound: *There is a soul in man, and the soul is, beyond expression, great and precious.*

SECTION II.

THE SOUL'S ACCOUNTABILITY AND IMMORTALITY.

RATIONAL AND MORAL NATURE ACCOUNTABLE—ACTIVITY, UNCONSCIOUS, INSTINCTIVE, INTELLIGENT, AND VOLUNTARY—GROUND OF RESPONSIBILITY—IN CHRIST'S TEACHING—LAST JUDGMENT—IMMATERIALITY AND IMMORTALITY—PERDITION OF SOUL—SIN AND DEATH—ELEMENT OF ETERNAL LIFE—LIFE AND IMMORTALITY BROUGHT TO LIGHT BY THE GOSPEL.

ACCOUNTABILITY attaches only to the rational and moral nature, and attaches to it, of necessity. A river flows on in its course; but whether rapidly or slowly, in a wide or narrow stream and with clear or troubled waters, it flows unconsciously and without meriting either praise or blame. The tree strikes its roots and spreads its branches; but we attribute to it no virtue; and when it withers and perishes, we charge it with no crime. The animal frame is sound and healthy, or it is attacked by disease, or is struck down by sudden accident, or seems to sink of itself; but no judgment is passed upon it, as if it deserved either commendation or condemnation. The irrational creature walks, flies, creeps, or swims; it seeks

its food in the herb of the field, or it preys upon some other form of animal life in order to sustain its own; but neither good nor evil is or can be predicated of it on these accounts. The river, the tree, the animal frame, do not act, but are acted upon. Consciousness, intelligence, conscience, and volition, are wanting to them. They are, only what they are made, and as they are affected by circumstances over which they can exert no control. Even the living creature, though voluntary to a limited extent, is under the irresistible law of instinct, and has no faculty of judgment and no sense of God and of right and wrong to govern its choice.

The spiritual nature of man belongs to quite another order of being. This is not passive merely, but active; and its activity is not instinctive merely, but intelligent and moral. Man is endowed with Reason, with Conscience, with Will. This Will, again, is the royal power within him, the presiding judge in the inward tribunal, who listens to the emotions, the affections, the inclinations, the appetites, and, above all, the judgment and the conscience; but having heard them all, itself alone chooses and determines. The human soul is self-determining. It is not compelled, not placed under irresistible laws like those of instinct, but is constituted to choose and refuse for itself. The entire doctrine of responsibility is involved in this

fact. If the acts of the soul were either involuntary or compulsory, and not the effect of its own determination and free choice, it would be thus far blameless and meritless; but they cannot be so. What a man distinctly, voluntarily chooses, prefers, whether good or bad, is in every sense his, his own creation, and for this he, and he alone, is responsible. The waters of the river, the leaves and fruit of the tree, the condition of the animal system, and the movements of an irrational creature, have in them neither moral goodness nor moral evil; but the cherished, chosen principles, purposes, and determinations of the soul originate with itself, spring out of its will, and render it the rightful object of commendation or of reprehension.

Oftener, perhaps, than under any other aspect, Jesus represents the human soul, as exposed to that Eye which unerringly perceives all its evil and its good. He teaches in the most stirring words, that there is unutterable solemnity in every act of the spiritual nature, and that what a man deliberately thinks, desires and chooses in the depth of his soul is the most vital of all questions. The lesson is for ever profound and true; we need to feel that we can never for a moment escape the immutable law, "Sin is death; holiness is life." The God of the spiritual universe is for ever looking into the depths of the soul and the necessary effects of the evil or the good

which we choose are his sentence, pronounced for us or against us. The doctrine of the last judgment is the ultimate form of the doctrine of responsibility. The parable of the ten virgins, of the labourers in the vineyard, of the steward, of the talents, of the husbandmen, of the wheat and the tares, of the barren fig-tree, are so many varied representations of this overwhelming truth. The scrutiny of God is likened to the process of fanning and sifting wheat, or to that of dissolving and testing metals. The perfect rectitude of the Judge and his perfect knowledge of the innumerable peculiarities of each case are declared. The universality and the minuteness of the reckoning which will be taken are foreshown. Every secret thought, it is affirmed, and every idle word, will be brought into judgment. This spiritual responsible nature of man makes even his short residence on earth awfully serious, and invests every moment with everlasting interest. Self-inspection, watchfulness, and prayer, become the first duty of beings constituted as we are, endowed with conscience, reason, and will—beings, besides, who are destined to an existence, of which the present earthly life is only the commencement and the prophecy.

We assume, not without strong reason, that the soul is immaterial, but does immateriality involve immortality? Assuredly it involves indivisibility—

the immaterial must be indivisible; but whether indivisibility and immortality are synonymous may admit of grave doubt. Matter is made up of parts; it is capable from its nature of being decompounded and dissolved. But are we quite sure that decomposition and dissolution are destruction—are we not rather sure that they are not? Does not all the evidence on this subject which we possess sustain the conclusion, that matter is not destroyed—that, though its parts are separated and its form changed, it is not destroyed, not annihilated? If, then, we cannot argue destructibility from divisibility in the case of matter, shall we nevertheless rest the proof of indestructibility in the case of mind, on indivisibility,—that is, immateriality? If the soul be imperishable, at all events the certainty of this must not be grounded on the fact that it is immaterial and indivisible. The self-action and self-government of mind exalt it immeasurably above unconscious matter, and above all animal instincts and faculties: and its intellectual, and especially its moral powers, its unlimited capacities, and its lofty aspirations, create a strong presumption that it is formed for a higher destiny than they. But this is the utmost that can be legitimately maintained.

The absolute certainty of the soul's eternal existence is distinctly affirmed by Christ; but the ground

of this certainty is not its immaterial nature, but its moral condition. In Christ's teaching, holiness and holy being are immortal; godliness is immortal; rectitude, purity, truth, love, are immortal; and the soul in which these virtues have begun to dwell is an heir of eternal life. But that which has finally surrendered itself to ignorance, impurity, and enmity to good and to God, is an heir of eternal perdition, whatever that may mean. Even on this earth, incipient spiritual perdition may be awfully evident. There are instances even here of what may literally be called the soul's death, the death of intellect, heart, and conscience; appalling examples of the effect of moral evil in darkening, enfeebling, imbruting the inward nature, so that it seems bereft of all its rational and especially its moral powers. Nor can it be overlooked that on earth there exist causes to draw forth the energies and to sustain life in the soul, which can have no place hereafter. All good beings and all good shall hereafter be for ever separated from evil and evil beings. Evil shall hereafter be alone, and, alone, shall develop its rank and deadly nature, and exhibit its unmitigated effects. If this be true, and if evil beings shall be left absolutely alone in the midst only of evil, it is not hard to imagine that, in the progress of ages, they must become a terrible wreck, unutterably worse than

anything which earth has ever witnessed, and shall furnish a tremendous and everlasting vindication of the language "lost souls," "perished minds," "fires quenched," "lights gone out for ever in the blackness of darkness."

Jesus Christ teaches that sin is perdition; not that at some future day it shall produce death, but that it is death. From first to last, throughout all its course, at every moment, moral evil is only death. Unless it be extirpated, the soul can only die; it may exist in the sense of simply being, but it is really dying rather than living; and for ever, existence is a death, a process of perdition, whose final issue lies behind an impenetrable veil. But life is the destiny of that nature which has begun to be emancipated from moral evil. There is a holier and mightier vitality than that of the animal frame, or even than the physical life of the mind—its mere power to think, feel, and resolve. There is a life of life. God is the spring of pure being. Separated from him by ignorance and false views, by conscious guilt, and consequent distrust, and enmity, the soul carries in it the seeds of death. In order to live, it must be restored to God, and God must be restored to it, to its knowledge, confidence, and love. It is this life of God in man which Christ's gospel teaches is eternal; which not only shall never be extinguished, but is essen-

tially and necessarily immortal. On earth, in heaven, anywhere, everywhere throughout the universe, this is the eternal life; the only eternal life known to Christianity—union, reunion of the created mind with God. It is this which shall survive, uninjured, the separation of soul and body. That separation shall not harm the nobler being, the spiritual faculties shall be improved instead of being enfeebled by the crisis through which they pass; and the life of life within, unscathed, untouched, shall find itself in a new and genial sphere, with eternity for its irreversible inheritance. The soul's endless being is intelligence, rectitude, purity, love, and all goodness.

And this is brought to light by the Gospel, but nowhere else. "The gift of God is eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord."* "God so loved the world that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life."† "God's commandment is life everlasting."‡ "To whom shall we go?" said the disciples to Jesus; "thou hast the words of eternal life."§ "This is life eternal, that they might know thee the only true God," &c. ‖ "He that receiveth my words, hath everlasting life." ¶ The words of Christ are likened to a "well of water springing up

* Romans vi. 23. † John iii. 16. ‡ Ib. xii. 50.
§ John vi. 68. ‖ Ib. xvii. 3. ¶ Ib. v. 24.

to everlasting life."* "Thy brother shall rise again," Jesus said to Martha when her brother Lazarus lay in the tomb. She replied, "I know that he shall rise again in the resurrection, at the last day. Jesus answered, He that believeth in me, though he were dead, yet shall he live; and he that liveth and believeth in me shall never die."† Thus impressively and majestically did Christ announce the Divine life in the soul of man, a life unhurt by the death of the body, and of immortal duration. If the miracle of the raising of Lazarus be counted for nothing, at least on some occasion of bereavement, words of this import, words of unexampled simplicity, dignity, and strength, fell from Christ's lips. Beside the graves of men and at their festive boards, on all occasions Christ proclaimed the Soul! It is real! it is great! it is accountable! it is immortal! The body shall die. The earth and these heavens shall pass away; but the Soul endures for ever, in Life or in Perdition!

* John iv. 14. † Ib. xi. 24—26.

CHAPTER III.

OF GOD.

IN TWO SECTIONS.

SECTION I.—THE SPIRITUALITY, UNITY, AND MORAL PERFECTION OF GOD.

II.—THE PATERNITY OF GOD.

SECTION I.

SPIRITUALITY, UNITY, AND MORAL PERFECTION OF GOD.

GOD, FOUNDATION OF ALL RELIGION—BEING OF GOD ASSUMED IN GOSPELS—AN ORIGINAL INTUITION—PROOF IN OUR NATURE OF DIVINE SPIRITUALITY—ANGELIC SOULS—SPIRITUALITY INCLUDES LIFE AND INTELLIGENCE—VEGETABLE, ANIMAL, INTELLECTUAL, MORAL LIFE—THE ORIGINAL PARENTAL LIFE—INFINITE INTELLIGENCE—CHRIST AT JACOB'S WELL—ONE INFINITE ACCOUNTS FOR EXISTING PHENOMENA—MORE THAN ONE CONTRADICTORY—DUALISM—POLYTHEISM—A SUPREME AMONG THE GODS—CHRIST PROCLAIMING UNITY—HEATHEN SENTIMENTS AND PRESENTIMENTS—CHARACTER OF PAGAN GODS—JEWISH MISREPRESENTATIONS—THE GOD OF CHRIST PERFECT EXCELLENCE.

THE age in which Christ appeared, fearfully dark as it was, was not all content to abide in darkness. Even then, many burdened hearts did earnestly seek after God, and many a piercing cry was lifted up from the depths of paganism for the true light of Heaven. Jesus came to respond to that cry, to quiet the troubled bosom of man, and to bring to his knowledge the only object of worship and of love. To reveal God is a higher office than to make known the soul. The doctrine of God is the foundation of

all religion. Every system of religion must have a god, and the character of the religion corresponds necessarily with the character of the god,—is, indeed, wholly determined by this, and will be material or spiritual, feeble or powerful, pure or corrupt, degrading or elevating, cruel or benignant, just as the Being for whom it claims the veneration of men recedes from excellence, or approaches it.

It formed no part of the work of Jesus to demonstrate the being of God to the world. The "à priori" and "à posteriori" proofs on this subject, as well as the historical proof grounded on the alleged consent of all past ages and of all nations, find no place in the Gospels. No trace of the argument from the work to the worker, from the contrivance to the contriver, from the marks of intelligence and design in the visible universe to an all-designing mind, is discoverable here. The old hypothesis of the eternity of the universe is not combated, nor that of the everlasting concourse of atoms in immensity, and their fortuitous combinations, producing all the manifold results which we now witness in the creation around us. The existence of a Supreme Eternal Cause is assumed in the New Testament, as a first principle; and, as in the case of the soul, here also a direct and fearless appeal is made to the intuitions and to the consciousness of the human mind. It is in these, at

last, that we reach the most satisfactory ground of faith in the being of God; and it may be fairly questioned whether, apart from these, the "à priori" and "a posteriori" arguments have ever by themselves overcome the settled unbelief of a single human being. There seems to be a primitive faith on this subject, which can only be traced to the same origin with the mind itself. It is congenial and native to the soul, to believe in God. Men may work themselves into an opposite belief; they may at last resign themselves to atheism, either in consequence of the overwhelming difficulty and darkness of the subject, or owing to moral causes; but none begin with this. The first faith of man everywhere is theistic, not atheistic. With interminable and wide differences in other respects, there is a marvellous concurrence of sentiment up to a certain point, among all nations and ages. That there is divinity somewhere in this great universe, that there is an object of worship and of obedience, is an original belief, dating from the constitution of the soul itself.

In passing from the Being to the Nature of God, we are compelled to reason from ourselves; for from ourselves alone, from our own higher nature, a pathway is found up to the Highest Nature of all. The common argument from effect to cause is unanswer-

able, so far as it goes; the material universe proves the Being of a Maker for the simple reason that every effect must have a cause. But the material universe does not and cannot prove the spiritual nature of its cause. The only proof, the only hint of this is given in our own spirituality, and nowhere else. The New Testament affirms the existence of angels, a race of pure spirits, intermediate between man and God. The fact rests entirely on the authority of revelation, but it seems to involve no peculiar difficulty. The idea of unembodied spirits is quite as conceivable as that of spirits embodied, and perhaps there are even some difficulties in the latter mode of being which do not apply to the former. The fact also appears to be quite in harmony with the analogies of the creation. Among material things and beings there are gradations without number, all very beautiful and suggestive of the opulence and power of the Creator; and it is not hard to believe that, in the same way, and with the same effect, important gradations may exist among spiritual creatures also. The New Testament affirms that man does not constitute the solitary order of this form of existence, but is allied to an elder brotherhood of angels; the elder and the younger alike tracing their descent immediately from the great "Father of spirits." But whether with or without

the aid of this intermediate step, it is from our own souls that we ascend to the conception of the Infinite Soul—from the spiritual nature within us, to the spiritual nature above us and over all.

The spirituality of God suggests two thoughts, Life and Intelligence. If a Spirit, God is a Life. The word brings us in front of an impenetrable mystery, before which we stand in helpless wonder. The first step in the ascent from unorganized matter perplexes and confounds us. We may be able to watch the vegetative process in its successive stages, and to distinguish the phenomena which mark each stage. The seed and the soil in which it is planted we may be able to subject to analysis, and thus to ascertain the peculiar properties of both. The action of the sun and the rain may be well understood, and science shall explain the entire course of vegetation; but if we ask what that vital principle is in which vegetation originates, science to this day leaves the question unanswered. Next above vegetable life is animal life—a deeper and darker secret still. The distance is immeasurable between unconscious matter, organized or unorganized, and even the lowest form of animal existence. Here is not merely organization, not merely unconscious change, but self-motion, voluntary, conscious motion, and capacity of enjoyment and suffering, an awful and inscrutable power

of willing, feeling, and doing. It has never been penetrated; perhaps it is impenetrable by mortals. Science cannot explain it, cannot assist us to imagine it. Next above animal life is intellectual, by which even the lower animals are distinguished in different degrees, indicating, as they often do very plainly, that they too have their thoughts, their affections, their calculations, their reasonings, and their plans. Here is life within life, mystery within mystery; but it is in man that both are revealed in their true greatness. Reason in man surpasses immeasurably the highest forms of intelligence as it exists in the inferior tribes, and at all events at this limit their progress terminates. There is a mystery more awful still of which man alone on this earth is the sanctuary. They have no moral nature, no conscience, no sense of God, of right and wrong, of immortality, of responsibility, of judgment to come. But man is thus endowed and exalted. Here is life yet higher still, mystery still more profound! But from vegetable, animal, intellectual, moral, human, angelic life—from created life in all its wondrous modes—we ascend through an intervening distance which is immeasurable, up to Him who is called "The Life." It is a noble image of the Divine nature. We think of God before the creation of the universe, alone in immensity, "The Life," indestructible, perfect, pure

Life, needing nothing from without, inexhaustibly rich in Himself. We think of Him sending forth life and peopling space with countless forms of material and spiritual glory. All, wherever it is and whatever its form, is from Him—He alone is the underived, independent, original, everlasting Life.

The God of the New Testament is not a quality, not an idea, or a process, or a law; not a thing, but a Being, an Agent, a Life. Nor this alone. As truly as He is Life, so truly is He also Mind, a living Mind, The Presiding Mind of the universe. And if created spirits are endowed with high capacities, and enriched with varied and vast knowledge, what must be the resources and the powers of the Uncreated, All-creating Spirit? "He that planted the ear, shall He not hear? He that formed the eye, shall He not see? He that teacheth man knowledge, shall not He know?" The universe in all its kingdoms, in all the manifold departments of each of these kingdoms, in all the countless facts with their hidden principles which belong to each of these departments,—the vast universe in the past, the present, and the future, must stand revealed in the clear light of the Divine knowledge. All truth must dwell in the Infinite understanding, as in its native home. We bow down before the measureless heights, the unfathomable depths, the illimitable possessions of the uncreated

Mind. Worship becomes not merely reasonable but necessary, a tribute which cannot be withheld from such a Being. The nature of worship is understood and felt at once, and as deeply the wickedness of substituting any material acts for the free and genuine aspirations of the soul.

Such a doctrine of God as we have imperfectly sketched surely demanded, for its announcement to the world, a great occasion and an extraordinary herald. But it was a Jew, a young man, a working carpenter, who published the doctrine eighteen hundred years ago, and to a poor woman. After a long journey, Jesus was sitting by the side of a well, in a retired place, when a woman of Samaria came to draw water. She belonged to a people with whom any other Jew would have scorned to hold intercourse; but He began to talk to her on the subject of religion, and then and there to open to her mind, simply and familiarly, some of the divinest ideas which have ever been put into the language of men. The Samaritans and the Jews were both wrong in their prevailing notions of worship and of God. To the one, God was in Samaria; to the other, in Jerusalem. But He taught her that the true God was not a local or national divinity, but a universal presence, and that true worship was always only spiritual, for the simple reason that the object of worship was a Spirit.

"Woman, believe me, the hour cometh, when neither in this mountain nor yet at Jerusalem ye shall worship the Father. . . . The hour cometh, and now is, when the true worshippers shall worship the Father in spirit and in truth; for the Father seeketh such to worship Him. God is a Spirit; and they that worship Him must worship Him in spirit and in truth." *

This is a specimen of Christ's teaching, not an exception to it. Uniformly he turned the thoughts of mankind to the Infinite, Ever-living Intelligence, and summoned the world to believe and adore.

The idea of more than one Infinite Being is contradictory and impossible. On the supposition that there are two or more, they must be either in harmony or in conflict. But if they are in perfect and everlasting harmony, this is in effect to say that they are identical, and nothing is gained by the notion of plurality. On the other hand, if they are in opposition one to another, such a conflict could produce nothing but universal anarchy and destruction—a state of things which finds no realization in the actual world. The existence of one Infinite Being harmonizes with the facts of the universe, and sufficiently accounts for them; and the reasoning is now perfectly familiar, as it is entirely satisfactory, by which

* John iv. 22–24.

it is made out, that the creation in all its regions indicates the hand and the mind of only one supreme Author and Ruler. The atom and the world, the insect and the man, the single globe and the countless spheres that people space,—all, so far as our knowledge of them extends, are governed by the same great laws. The separate departments and kingdoms of nature, whether great or small, whether near or remote, whether inanimate, animated, or rational, do not point to diverse authorities, but, on the contrary, form a harmonious whole which must have originated with one mind, and must be governed by one supreme authority. All this is accepted, in our day, by many who do not bow to Christianity. But the world, as a whole, groans to this hour beneath a vast and monstrous Pantheon. Judaism, Christianity, and Mohammedanism are the only existing systems of religion which recognise only one God; and it will not be questioned that the last owes this faith to the one or the other of the two former. The suffrages of mankind are against the doctrine of God's unity, by an overwhelming majority.

But we have to do with the ancient, not the present state of opinion and of faith among mankind. The mildest form of departure from Divine unity in the ancient world was that which was found among the Chaldeans and Persians, nations certainly not the

lowest at that time in the scale of advancement and civilization. Their creed comprehended two objects of supreme worship, one the author only of good, and another the author of all evil, and nothing but evil; the first a purely benevolent, and the second a purely malevolent being, answering to the light and the darkness found alike in the natural and in the moral world. At this day, we possess far higher means of unravelling the dark phenomena of providence than were accessible to antiquity. We have learned to resolve physical into moral evil as its necessary cause, direct or indirect; and for moral evil itself, we have been taught to regard it as the voluntary abuse of the freedom of the created will. We may be able to perceive that in the very existence of a created will, there was involved the possibility of its choosing to separate from the Divine will,—a thing which, except by destroying the very essence of will, the physical omnipotence of God could not prevent, with which indeed physical omnipotence could have nothing to do. It may be clear to us, that all moral evil is the act of responsible because free creatures, the possibility of which was involved in their creation, and which no mere power could have prevented. We may therefore behold the one God doing only good, retrieving the effects of the sin of His creatures, putting down the evil which they originate, and

bringing good out of that evil, so far as such a thing is possible. But in the absence of the aids and the light which we now possess, and in the view of the unnatural and confounding mixture of evil with good which moral providence exhibits, ancient dualism must be considered the most pardonable and plausible form of polytheistic error.

By the side of dualism, the enormous polytheism of the ancient world reared its head. The deification of spirits evil and good, of the elements of nature, of the signs of the sky, of human beings, of beasts, birds, reptiles, insects, inanimate wood, stone, clay, was widely, almost universally sanctioned. Sky, and earth, and sea, mountains and valleys, and forests and rivers, were peopled with gods and goddesses. It may be true, at the same time, that every ancient religion contained the idea of some one god who was supreme among the many; but then this being was not, therefore, more worshipped than the others, but less. He might be really greater, but he was less important, less conversant with ordinary human affairs; and him, therefore, it was less necessary to invoke. It is not denied, also, that there might be in the ancient world select individuals, who had ascended above the crowd of inferior divinities to the conception of one Almighty Being. But the earth, notwithstanding, was filled with gods and covered

with temples. The whole ancient world had a scarcely exaggerated type of its theistic condition, in the capital of Greece—"It was easier to find a god than a man in Athens."

From Egypt and Persia, from Greece and Rome, from idols, and temples, from priests, poets, and sages, we turn to the lowly Teacher of Nazareth. He proclaimed that God is One, and that the universe, one in its origin and its end, is under the dominion of one Supreme Ruler, the King eternal, immortal, and invisible, the only wise God. From the beginning to the close of His ministry, He proclaimed one true God. Everywhere, always, He proclaimed One God. No hint of any other doctrine than that of absolute divine unity is ever given, none other is named or noticed. "There is none good but one; that is, God." * "That they might know Thee, the only true God." † "There is one God, and none other but He." ‡ The proclamation of God's unity by the voice of Christ was first heard throughout the land of Judea; but the sound was by and by wafted far beyond it. It echoed among the hoary idolatries of the world, and shook them to their foundations. The echo has not died away—it is heard now,—it shall yet be heard above the clamour and

* Matthew xix. 17. † John xvii. 3. ‡ Mark xii. 32.

hubbub of all rival faiths, and shall drown every other voice. One God, one supreme object of reverence and love, of worship and obedience—only One!

The occasion will arise at a more advanced stage of our inquiries, for noticing with special interest the sentiments of certain heathen philosophers and moralists concerning God. It is here cheerfully admitted, that these sentiments are often very just, very noble, very strengthening, and very sanctifying, and are, in truth, the early promise of a diviner age. Light shone in the darkness, and these men almost saw the daybreak, and almost descried the first streaks of the dawn of a hallowed morning. Some of their ideas respecting God, His majesty and His purity, His wisdom, and even His mercifulness, astonish us by their profoundness and their grandeur. But they were entertained by few—oh, how few out of the vast multitudes! They also partook more of the character of sudden and transient inspirations than of settled convictions; and they formed but a dim and shadowy prefiguration of the brighter revelations of a future age. We have already noticed the belief, in the ancient world, of one Being supreme amongst the gods, which was also otherwise modified, and took the form of faith in one supreme nature embodied in many separate divinities; and it cannot be doubted that even this was fitted to

correct, in some measure, the spirit of polytheism during "the times of ignorance." But this "Deus Maximus" was felt to be a cold mythical abstraction, rather than a loving father and a fountain of living excellence. A God of perfect rectitude, purity, truth, and love was virtually unknown to ancient paganism. Many of its deities were monsters of vice—impersonations of all that was impure, cruel, and vile. Their history was a tissue of superhuman abominations; and many of the very rites of their worship were revolting and unclean.

Turning to the Jewish nation, from whom so much might have been expected, we find that they had shockingly misrepresented the character, the attributes, the doings, the very nature of the True God. In the prevailing conceptions of the people, His justice was little else than revenge—His love partiality—His providence special and arbitrary interposition—His revelation a cabalistic secret—and His infinite nature a huge extension of the caprices and passions of man.

Jesus of Nazareth revealed a Being necessarily opposed to all evil and essentially righteous, true, pure, and good. All conceivable and all possible perfections dwell in His nature, and shine there in unclouded light. This God is Excellence, only Excellence, Excellence Infinite and Everlasting. The

very idea of such a Being is Divine. Were there defect in God, even to the smallest amount, He could be no more the resting-place of the created mind; a dark shadow would fall upon His whole character, and a torturing and insupportable sense of insecurity would afflict the whole universe. But Jesus of Nazareth summons us to worship a Being in whom the intellect, affections, and conscience of man may safely repose—an object worthy of the eternal admiration, confidence, and love of all rational creatures, —the Only Holy One, the God of Glory.

SECTION II.

THE PATERNITY OF GOD.

TYPE, IN MAN, REALITY IN GOD—CHILDSHIP OF ALL SOULS—IN SOUL ONLY, LIKENESS TO GOD—AUTHORITY IN GOD—LOVE—GREAT FAMILY OF GOD—INTRODUCTION OF MORAL EVIL—FATHERHOOD OF GOD IN TEACHING OF JESUS—PARENTAL LOVE THE MOVING POWER IN UNIVERSE.

THE relation which God sustains to man is only less important than His Being and the properties of His Nature. "How is God connected with me? how is He affected towards me?" are questions of infinite interest to a rational being. The answer of the Teacher of Nazareth to these questions is simple and explicit, and is conveyed in a single word, one of profound significance and of surpassing tenderness—the word Father. This term belongs emphatically to man, and it is one of the wealthiest in human language, and men at least can have no difficulty in comprehending all its meaning. The relation which it indicates has no such interpretation, amongst other intelligent creatures, as it finds in this world. There is no fatherhood or childhood among

angels, no derivation of being from one to the other. But men on earth are connected together in this extraordinary sense; and from the imperfect type existing among themselves, they at least are able to rise to the supreme reality in God. The human spirit is the offspring, the immediate and direct offspring, of the Ever-living Spirit. It is capable of bearing and does bear, and it is the only thing that bears or is capable of bearing, a resemblance to the Great Being. God created the heavens, the earth, and all material things; they exist by His infinite power; we can say no more, no less. But it is not simply true, that God created minds; He is the Father of minds, and of minds only.

This representation of God's relation to man is beautifully suggestive, amongst other things, of His authority, for the very highest form of authority known in this world is the parental. The power of a sovereign, over the country which he governs, is only conventional; it admits of being circumscribed or suspended; and there are many quarters of the world where no such thing is recognised or known. All earthly forms of authority, whether belonging to the political, the civil, or the social relations of men, are accidental and official, created by men themselves for their own purposes, and may be modified or entirely abolished by the power that

created them. The authority of a father over his child is founded in nature, and is established by the Great God himself. This is not, like the others, a voluntary arrangement among men themselves, which they are at liberty to continue or to terminate as they please; it is a special, Divine constitution. Such authority as a father possesses over his child, so natural, so deeply founded, so real, no human being besides can possess over another. And this, accordingly, is the selected type of the supreme rights of God, and of that essential sovereignty which belongs to the Father of minds. No other explains, as this does, the foundation and the nature of Divine authority. There may be other terms which express the single fact of sovereignty in God, and do so more pointedly and directly than this. For example: He is compared to a king; a name which belongs to the highest secular office and the highest secular authority on earth. "The Lord is King for ever and ever." His creatures are His subjects! He has given them righteous and wise laws, and they must answer to Him for obedience and disobedience. The comparison is obviously just up to a certain limit; but it is as obvious that, in many essential respects, it falls immeasurably short of the truth of God's relation to man. The king and his people are connected together by one bond, and one bond only, the bond

of authority and corresponding subjection. But the intimacy and tenderness of the connexion between God and His rational creatures are not expressed, or in any way suggested, by this phraseology. All that is conveyed by the word king—authority, rectitude, wisdom, power—is really and equally contained in the word father; but there is very much conveyed by the word father, which is not capable of being expressed by the word king. God is a King, but He is a Father-King; His subjects are His own children, and His government of them, in its very origin, and consequently in its essential spirit, in all its laws and in all its acts, is strictly and only parental. God's Kinghood is a figure, His Fatherhood is the profoundest reality. He may justly, and in certain respects, be compared to a king; but He is a Father.

The relation in which God stands to intelligent beings, of all orders, sheds amazing glory on them. All souls, wherever they are in the wide universe, are brothers; they have one Father, even God. It is hardly possible to embrace this immense brotherhood, this vast family, by any effort of imagination, and some of its aspects are so appalling that we are deterred from making the attempt.

We are taught that the first-born of God, the elder sons of creation, unfallen angels, are associated in

the invisible state with multitudes of disembodied perfected human spirits. Another section of the great family is found on this earth, and it includes a vast majority of the earth's inhabitants. They are God's true children, but they have wandered from their Father, have ceased to think of Him, almost to know Him, and with them He is patiently striving by His Spirit in their minds and by His outward providence. A third section includes the reclaimed children of God in this world; those who have been arrested in their wanderings, have heard the voice of their Father, and have been subdued and won back to Him. Between such reclaimed souls on earth and their God there must exist a singular tenderness of affection. They are His sons twice born, by generation and regeneration, His offspring at first, but also created anew and restored to Him by trust and love. Of every one of them the Great Father proclaims, "This my son was lost, and is found; was dead, and is alive again."

But impenetrable darkness overhangs the remaining division of the sons of God—unreclaimed minds in the invisible world. The entrance of sin and death among rational creatures is a tremendous and unfathomable mystery. On earth, in the history of many a home, it is seen that some of the circle abide in affection and in duty, while others prove

undutiful and lawless; and the counterpart of this, we are taught, exists in a far higher region. The great family of God has been the scene of dark revolt. The one mystery of the universe, into which all else that troubles and confounds us may be resolved, is no other than this:—"The created will separating from the Uncreated, struggling against it, and ruining itself by the mad effort." Multitudes of rebellious wills have doomed themselves to perdition. But they have doomed themselves; and whatever God has done He has done to avert, not to produce, spiritual ruin. How or why the children have rebelled against their Father, and perished in their rebellion, is a secret which we may not be able to unveil. But the act was their own, wholly and only their own, and as wholly and only in defiance and despite of Him, who deserved nothing but obedience and love. Dark, impenetrably dark though this issue be, the reality of the Fatherhood of God is luminous, glorious, immoveable. It is a first principle, as stable and as sure as God's Being; and all that it involves of tenderness and love is as indubitable as ever. The simple truth of our parentage abides; amidst whatever mystery, God is our Father, the Father of minds.

This great fact was announced marvellously often in the teaching of Jesus. Sometimes, when referring

to God, He makes use of the more personal and intimate designation, my Father. "My Father's kingdom."* "My Father hath appointed me."† "My Father worketh hitherto."‡ "It is my Father that honoureth me."§ But much oftener, generally indeed, he adopts the more comprehensive word, and speaks of God as the Father. "The Father hath life in Himself."‖ "Neither in this mountain, nor yet at Jerusalem, ye shall worship the Father."¶ "He that hath learned of the Father."** "Not that any man hath seen the Father."†† "I will pray the Father."‡‡ "Whatsoever ye shall ask of the Father."§§ "I came forth from the Father, and go to the Father."‖‖ "The promise of the Father."¶¶ "The times and the seasons the Father, hath put in His own hand."*** "I shall show you plainly of the Father."††† Addressing not any select class, but all those indiscriminately who listened to His teaching, He represented God as the Father. This is the more significant, when it is recollected that the very work of Jesus on earth, at least an essential part of His work, was to make known God. The root of human sin was false views of God, misconception of His character, imagining

* Matt. xxvi. 29. † Luke xxii. 29. ‡ John v. 17.
§ John viii. 14. ‖ Ib. v. 26. ¶ Ib. iv. 21.
** Ib. vi. 45. †† Ib. vi. 46. ‡‡ Ib. xiv. 16.
§§ Ib. xv. 16. ‖‖ Ib. xvi. 28. ¶¶ Acts i. 4.
*** Acts i. 7. ††† John xvi. 25.

that what He had declared might nevertheless not be true. This constituted the first sin ever perpetrated in our world, and was the original cause of death, the death of the soul. On the other hand, it is declared that this is life, eternal life, "to know Thee, the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom Thou hast sent."* Ignorance was death; and knowledge is the life opposed to this death,—the knowledge of God. To convey this knowledge was one of the highest purposes of Christ's mission. In all the labours of His life, in His teaching and in His cross, one grand design was to reveal to men what God really was, that they might be constrained to return to Him. The question, therefore, is inexpressibly momentous, what does Jesus say concerning God, how does He represent the relation in which He stands to intelligent beings? Only one reply can be given to this question: Jesus reveals God as the Father of souls. And if there be significance in the word, if there be truth in the relation, this is of all things most sure, God loves infinitely His own offspring. He is a true Father, He is a perfect Father, without any of the blemishes or faults, and with all the excellences, that are possible to the relation. Take from the word father all of error, weakness, caprice, with which it may ever be associated; heighten to infinity all in it that is

* John xvii. 3.

tender, endearing, excellent—that is God. He is wise, He is righteous, He is mighty, His holy purposes shall stand, He must and will do all that is necessary for the good of the entire universe. But, besides power, besides wisdom, besides rectitude, besides immutability, there is infinite tenderness in His nature. The heart of God is the heart of a father for all His rational offspring. Paternal love is the element in which God lives and reigns. Paternal love is the moving force in the spiritual universe, unbounded, unchanging, everlasting love; infinite desire to produce happiness, to fill creation with the largest possible amount of enduring joy!

Jesus of Nazareth reveals for the worship and love of man,—A Spirit; One Spirit, the dwelling-place and Fountain of infinite moral excellence; a Being standing in the nearest possible relation to intelligent creatures—the Father of souls!

The world was ignorant of its high descent, of its Divine parentage. The mind of man, God's own child, had all but lost the sense of its origin. Jesus came near to tell men that they had still a Father, and that their Father pitied and loved them. He came to wake up in the bosom of God's fallen sons a cry after their Father, and to bring back the guilty wanderers to their home!

CHAPTER IV.

RECONCILIATION OF THE SOUL AND GOD.

DEPARTURE FROM GOD THE ROOT AND ESSENCE OF EVIL—EVER-WIDENING—RETRIBUTIVE CHARACTER—RUIN OF THE SPIRITUAL NATURE—UNION AND SEPARATION OF MINDS · RECONCILIATION THE END OF CHRIST'S MEDIATION, OF HIS LIFE, AND OF HIS DEATH.

To investigate the doctrine of reconciliation, in the sense of the theological schools, would require a much broader basis than the materials which belong to our proper subject afford. That subject deals only with the personal teaching of Jesus Christ, and with the bearings of His teaching as He himself exhibited them, on the wants of human nature and on the state of the world. It does not reach the later expositions of the Christian faith by the Apostles; and still less, that classification of its articles, which was not accomplished till long after their times; and least of all that elaborated system, the boast, perhaps the bane, of modern theology, so minute in its details and marked by such rigorous regard to logical order.

Two subjects, we have seen, were prominent in the

personal teaching of Christ—the soul and God; and there was an obvious design in the selection of these subjects, besides their intrinsic importance. In interpreting the soul and in revealing God, Jesus aimed at more than simply communicating new and ennobling knowledge to the world. What humanity needed was not merely to believe in the soul and to believe in God; it needed still more to learn how the soul might be restored to God, and how God might again dwell in the soul. The world knew and felt to its core that its spiritual relations were awfully deranged, but the source and cause of this evil it knew not. Jesus declared that the grand and sole cause was to be found in wilful departure from God, —departure in conscience, in affection, in thought. The two beings most nearly related to each other in the universe, man and God, the son and the Father, had become estranged and almost unknown to one another. On the part of God, indeed, there had been nothing but anxious love, agencies, messages, influences of love, from age to age, in order to overcome and subdue His children. He had seen and known them well in their wanderings and darkness; but they had almost ceased to know or think of Him. The first deliberate act of separation from God proved, as it could not fail to do, not only, itself, evil, but a spreading curse, self-perpetuating and self-propagat-

ing. Divergence, once commenced, increasee rapidly, and separated man from God by an ever-widening gulf. The process of alienation was extensive as it was swift, just as when an inconsiderable speck spreads and deepens into a thick, black cloud, and at last clothes the heavens with darkness. The true God was driven forth from the spirit He had created, and man gradually lost almost all knowledge and all faith. The evidence of history, secular and sacred, as to the condition of the ancient world, is uniform and decisive. The uncertainty that hung around even the being of God, the profound ignorance of His nature and character, the multiplication of objects of worship, the conversion of the glorious One into an "image made like to corruptible man, and to four-footed beasts and creeping things"—these utter a language not to be misunderstood. The child of God almost ceased to know that he had a Father, or who was his Father.

But this ever-widening separation between man and God involved manifold, spiritual calamities. God is infinite rectitude, purity, wisdom, truth, and love; and the entire system of things created by Him in all its parts, and especially the moral nature of His children, as He formed them, was an expression and embodiment of these principles. It belonged to the moral nature of man as constituted by God; it was its

positive destiny to move in harmony with the Eternal Reason and the Eternal Will; and thus moving, to be as surely blessed in its degree as God Himself is. The act of wilful departure from God, therefore, was not simply a violation of filial duty on the part of God's children; it was positive separation from rectitude and wisdom and all moral excellence, and, in another form, as certainly, separation from happiness, from peace, from life, as God had determined life to man. Thenceforward there were two wills and two courses,—the will of God and His infinitely wise, right, and good course; the human will, and its course of folly, of moral evil, and of necessary suffering.

But the secondary and remoter consequences of departure from God were not less lamentable than its primary effects. The laws of spiritual providence possess an almighty, retributive energy. Never a wrong can be done to God without recoiling on the wrong-doer, with direful violence. Men were faithless to God, and ere long they were false to themselves; they abandoned God, and ere long they became strangers to themselves: first they dishonoured God, and then they degraded their own nature. In a world from which the true God had been banished the soul was trodden in the dust, and its holiest powers and its immortal destinies were shrouded in thick darkness. The first and highest

relation, the relation to God, being violated, all other relations were in their turn overthrown, and the entire spiritual nature became a disorder and a ruin. Separation from God is not a partial, but a universal and unmitigated evil; it is death. The stream cut off from the fountain must be dried up, the branch severed from the tree must wither, the plant torn up from the soil must die. The root, not only of our animal, but of our intellectual and moral life, is in God. We are branches of the mighty Tree of universal spiritual existence, we are streams from that Fountain which alone supplies the water of life, in whatsoever channel it flows. To be in God—that is, to think, feel, and choose in harmony with rectitude, purity, wisdom, truth, and love—is the original constitution, the life of the soul; it is its destiny, its freedom also, its glory, its very being. To depart from God, on the other hand, is to unite with folly, with wrong, with suffering. This is intellectual and moral ruin; it is truly death, such death as is possible to a rational and moral nature.

The union of minds, whether of the created with each other, or of the created with the uncreated, can consist only in knowledge, love, confidence, and sympathy. For the real indwelling of any two souls it is essential, first, that they understand, and then that they appreciate and esteem, one another; that

they cherish a mutual confidence and a sympathy in each other's pursuits, tastes, and aims. Ignorance, dislike, distrust, and want of sympathy, it is seen in a moment, must be death to their union; and, on the other hand, that union is obviously more living and more real as their knowledge and esteem of each other are increased, and as their mutual confidence, sympathy, and love are deepened. The death of the human mind, in relation to God, is ignorance or false views of His character, indifference or dislike, distrust, and want of sympathy. The life opposed to this death is right views of God. The source of peace and of inward excellence, of all that constitutes in the truest sense being to the soul, in its relation to God, is right views of Him, of His purity and His goodness, and of His merciful intentions towards His fallen children. It is a new and loving recognition of His character; it is recovered, childlike trust in Him; it is intelligent sympathy with His gracious procedure and plans. By knowledge, love, confidence, and sympathy, the Uncreated and the created minds are reunited, and no other union than this is possible to them. This is the righting again of the first and highest of all our relations, our relation to God; the only righting again which is needed or is possible; and this is grounded in the free surrender of the understanding, conscience, and heart to that

Eternal Will which is rectitude, purity, wisdom, truth, and love. This is life, renewed life. The stream is connected again with the living Fountain, the branch is grafted in again into the Tree, the plant is rooted again in the parent Soil. The prodigal son returns again to his Father's house and his Father's heart. The two beings most nearly related to each other in the whole universe—God and man—who were so awfully estranged, are brought together, reconciled.

The reconciliation of the soul and God was the highest end of the personal ministry of Jesus. He often spoke of this as connected with His life, and as still more mysteriously related to His death. "God so loved the world, that He gave His only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in Him should not perish, but have everlasting life." * "The Son of man came not to be ministered unto, but to minister, and to give His life a ransom for many." † "I am the good Shepherd: the good shepherd giveth his life for the sheep." ‡ "I lay down my life for the sheep." § "Therefore doth my Father love me, because I lay down my life that I may take it again. No man taketh it from me, but I lay it down of myself. I have power to lay it down, and I have power

* John iii. 16. † Matt. xx. 28.
‡ John. x. 11. § Ib. x. 15.

to take it again. This commandment have I received of my Father."* "Behold, we go up to Jerusalem; and the Son of man shall be betrayed unto the chief priests and unto the scribes, and they shall condemn him to death."† "All ye shall be offended because of me this night; for it is written, I will smite the shepherd, and the sheep of the flock shall be scattered abroad."‡ In the reconciliation of men to God, Jesus expected and was prepared to sacrifice His life; and, in point of fact, He did sacrifice His life for this end. No devout examiner of the Christian books can doubt, that the wonderful passages which have been quoted distinctly teach that the death of Christ not only marks an era of the most solemn interest in the development of His religion, but fills an extraordinary place, and exerts an extraordinary power among the active forces of Christianity. Whatever other connexions it may have, its relation to Jesus himself, as the highest expression of His love, and the strongest evidence of His invincible moral courage, and its relation to men as a mighty spiritual power acting upon the heart of the world, are beyond debate. But the whole of the ministry of Christ, and not the tragical close of it only, was a ministry of reconciliation. His life, as well as His death, was sacrificial and atoning. The soul and God at one, no longer divided

* John x. 17. † Matt. xx. 18. ‡ Ib. xxvi. 31.

by sin, by ignorance, enmity, and distrust, but reunited and reconciled; for this, Jesus both lived and died. The soul and God, as doctrines, constituted the chief theme of His teaching; but the doctrines were proclaimed because they contained the seed of life, of everlasting life to a dying world, and were fitted to originate a deep and vital change in men's consciences and hearts. In dealing with these doctrines, Christ's methods were various, but His aim was uniform; it was that men might recognise God and be reconciled to Him. Sometimes He revealed the soul to itself, its greatness and responsibility, its condition and its danger, and thus prompted it to rise to its own lofty sphere of thought and of action. Again, He revealed God to the soul as its Father, from whom it ought never to have been separated, and in reconciliation with whom only it could have peace and life. On the one hand, a deep and living faith in the destiny, the wants, and the claims of their own spiritual nature; on the other hand, a deep and living faith in the Father of their souls,—these constituted the grand, the pressing necessity of human beings in that age; they do so not less at this moment. Jesus sought, therefore, first to place within men a perpetual spiritual presence, and then to surround men with a perpetual Divine presence. By His life and by His death, He sought to restore God to man,

and man to God. The spiritual restoration and regeneration of the world—in other words, the establishment of a reign of God in the human soul—forms the true idea of the personal ministry of Christ, the true idea of His life, the true idea of His death.

PART V.

THE ARGUMENT FROM HIS WORK TO HIS DIVINITY.

HUMAN SYSTEMS OF RELIGIOUS TRUTH—MOHAMMEDANISM—HINDOOISM AND BUDDHISM—TALMUDISM—ANCIENT JEWISH SCRIPTURES—STOICISM, EARLIER AND LATER—ERRORS AND EXCELLENCES—SOCRATICISM OR PLATONISM—PHILO-JUDÆUS—LIFE OF SOCRATES—HIS DEATH—HIS FAITH AND HOPES—CHRISTIAN VIEWS OF THEM AND HIM—CHRISTIANITY CONTRASTED WITH TEACHING OF SOCRATES—SOLUTION, CHRIST'S TRUE DIVINITY.

If the representation which has been offered of the teaching of the gospels be faulty, it is by defect, not by excess. Only by an extended critical and patient study of the discourses and sayings of Jesus can we do justice to His character as a Teacher, and gain an impression at all adequate of His spiritual opulence and power. The words of this Being, even on common occasions, discover a breadth and universality without example; they are very simple, but they are at the same time always profoundly suggestive, and of inexhaustible force. Jesus not only announces separate ideas of the highest value, but His sayings may be likened to rich seeds or roots of truth, from

which spring up manifold living growths. Often, in dealing with a profound, hard, dense subject, a single utterance of His shall discover it to its depths, and leave it luminous for ever. The free and earnest soul deeply pondering the sentences which fell from His lips, feels itself in a lofty and holy region, where new expanses of light and glory in all directions break upon the sight; where forms of truth, long familiar, open freshly, and disclose unimagined wonders; and where an overpowering sense of reality, of living energy, and of Divinity, is created. But this experience is not to be gained but by devout, profound, and close study; and, as the study in the becoming temper of mind is prolonged, the experience, instead of fading, deepens marvellously.

We have now to compare, in a spirit of strict impartiality, the teaching of Jesus of Nazareth with whatever portions of professed truth the world has received from other hands, in other places and ages.

I. The latest noticeable antagonist of Christianity is the system which owes its birth to the genius, perhaps the piety, of Mohammed; and to which, on several obvious grounds, a high importance belongs. It has spread itself over a large part of the globe; is accepted by a hundred and fifty millions of the human race; and is, in itself, confessedly immensely

superior to all the forms of polytheism. The doctrine of One Supreme God, and of His all-ruling providence, is invaluable, and must have exerted a mighty influence for good wherever it was received. But an examination of this system is unnecessary here, and chiefly on two accounts:—First, not to notice the extravagances and follies which it contains, it is at variance in many parts with the established facts of science, and in many other parts with just moral sentiments. Second, in all its really important aspects, it is a copy from Judaism, or from Christianity, or from both. None acquainted with the Jewish and Christian Scriptures—the latter, and especially the former, much more ancient than the Koran—can doubt this fact for a moment. Altogether, in spite of its redeeming features, as a communication of spiritual truth to the world, a message respecting God or respecting man, respecting the Divine government or respecting human destinies, it does not admit of being compared with Christianity.

II. At the opposite extreme, in point of time, from the religion of Arabia, and not less opposite in point of character, stand the Hindoo or Brahminical and the Buddhist systems. Our notice of them shall be very short, and it is on this account that we venture to depart from the chronological order. The great

antiquity of these systems invests them with interest and importance. Buddhism belongs to a period at least several hundred years before the age of Christ, and Brahminism is certainly many centuries earlier, and may have been even much earlier than this; indeed is probably the most ancient form of religion now existing in the world. The one holds possession at this day of nearly the entire population of Hindoostan; the other is adopted by the three hundred millions of the Chinese empire. The Hindoo or Brahminical religion is in form and even in essence an enormous polytheism, if, indeed, it be not rather a true pantheism. The Buddhist system is virtually a philosophical atheism. In the one, whatever underlying unity it may be possible to discover, all the powers and parts of the universe are held to be proper objects of worship, to be indeed truly divine, inasmuch as they are all alike emanations of the divinity. In the other, there is no God but intellect. The Buddhist, though he may exalt the idea of an abstract intellectual unity, though he may recognise the concentration of the idea in saint or sage, or may fancy it diffused and distributed in innumerable forms, in reality worships nothing higher than his own soul, or the conception of that soul, developed under more propitious circumstances than his individual life has supplied. Eastern scholars who have exa-

mined the Hindoo Vedas, inform us that, along with much of a very opposite character, they contain passages of great sublimity on the holiest and grandest subject of thought, the Infinite Intelligence, the Fountain of Light and Life; and also many lessons of benevolence, purity, wisdom, and justice. Christians can receive the information with devout thankfulness, and can rejoice to believe that any such rays of light, however feeble and few, have fallen upon the darkness of the world. But we cannot on this account conceal from ourselves or the less deplore the idolatry, the pantheism, the moral abominations, the monstrous system of worship, and the monstrous forms of human society which have grown up beneath the shelter of Brahminism and Buddhism.

III. Passing back from the age of Mohammed, towards and beyond the Christian era, we meet with certain Jewish writings, to which it is maintained the teaching of Jesus of Nazareth was largely indebted. The modern Jew asserts, with much assurance, that all which is really valuable in the sayings of Christ was borrowed, more or less directly, from the Talmud. That collection of traditions and of expositions of the ancient Scriptures, known by this title, consisting of the Mishna or text, and two commentaries,—the one the Gemara of

Jerusalem, and the other the Gemara of Babylon,—has long been regarded by the Jewish people, and is still regarded, with the highest veneration. We do not profess to be able to discuss the debated question of its antiquity and authority, nor is such discussion at all necessary for our purpose. It is admitted freely, that much of what the Talmudical books contain was current among the Jews in the time of Christ, and probably long before it, and that, therefore, it is quite possible He may have borrowed from this source. It is admitted also that these books present many important religious and moral truths. But it is at the same time quite as undoubted that the mass of their contents is frivolous, and even false; and at all events, the Jews themselves do not deny that these writings are far inferior to the ancient inspired Scriptures. They may interpret, expand, or confirm the revelations of the Old Testament, but they themselves offer no new revelation, and add nothing to the Divine light before shed down from heaven. It will therefore be satisfactory and direct, at once to compare the teaching of Jesus with the system of truth in the ancient Scriptures.

IV. The peculiar poetical imagery and the magnificent and gorgeous diction which distinguish many passages of the Old Testament, are palpably wanting

in the Christian gospels. The lawgiver, the reformer, the poets, and the prophetic sages of ancient Israel speak in the name of Jehovah, in grand and solemn tones; while in the New Testament an apparently humble individual, using only the most familiar and simple language, claims to instruct the world. If there be sublimity here, it must lie in the thoughts themselves, not at all in the form in which they are presented. Christians have not been reluctant to honour the inspired seers of Israel; on the contrary, they entirely believe that the Old Testatament and the New are not hostile, but harmonious communications. They find, also, in the ancient devotional poetry of the Jews a profound analysis of religious experience, and a freshness and fervour of pious feeling altogether unsurpassed, and they rejoice to acknowledge that there is a large amount of imperishable truth which is common to both Scriptures. But it is not only denied that the later is borrowed from the earlier, and is only an imitation, a repetition of it; it is distinctly maintained besides that this is both more lucid and more complete than that, and contains discoveries which are entirely unknown to the more ancient book. We look in vain in the Old Testament for the radiant and overflowing benignity of the New—in vain for the universality, simplicity, and freedom that distinguish the New. The doctrine

of a reign of God in the minds and hearts of all men is not found there, nor the uniform assertion of the pure spirituality of worship and of the purely spiritual nature of the Great Object of worship, nor the luminous revelation of the soul in its reality, greatness, accountability, and endless life, or of that attribute of the Divine Nature which most of all endears God to man—Paternity. The soul and the Father of the soul, the return of the soul to its Father, and the reign of the Father in the soul, these, in their highest form, belong peculiarly to the teaching of Jesus, and they exalt it immeasurably above, not only all Talmudical and Rabbinical writings, but even the Divine oracles of an earlier age.

V. About three hundred years before Christ, Athens, rich in great men and in systems and sects, listened to the claim of a new teacher, Zeno, the founder of a new school. The system of the Stoics merits attention in this place, not so much in its early as in its later form. It became at last a theology and an ethical code more than either a physical or metaphysical philosophy, and at the commencement of the Christian era, and for two centuries later, it exerted no inconsiderable influence on the world. The names of Zeno, of Cleanthes, of Epictetus, of Seneca, and of Marcus Antoninus, are

not forgotten at this day by those who are interested in the genuine efforts of the human soul, and who watch the strugglings of the light of God with the darkness of the world. At the same time, it must not be forgotten, that the stoicism which is represented to us by this name was the product not of a single mind, but of the combined efforts of many noble minds for a succession of ages. They, wisely profiting by the defects and errors of other systems, extracting however the best portions and making important additions to them, succeeded at last in forming a new whole, which reflected great glory on the intellectual and moral powers which were capable of producing it. It was this finished and final form of the stoical system which was extensively embraced before the age of Jesus, and for two centuries later. And it is this, the work of many minds and many ages, which is to be compared with the labours of a single person during a course of only three years; the probability, amounting nearly to certainty, being that the work was indebted to this very person for some of its later and most valuable peculiarities.

It would be easy, without any injustice, to produce a humiliating account of the errors of Stoicism. We cannot wonder that on subjects which to this day defy speculation, the reasonings of the Stoics should be puerile and contradictory. The idea of

infinity or incorporeity they were able to attach only to the vacuum which encompasses the universe. An infinite, even an incorporeal God, in the proper sense of the term, they knew not. Philosophers of this school speak of the incorporeal reason, but they can mean only the unembodied reason. Between God and matter they recognised no essential distinction, and their highest conception of the difference was expressed when they said that God was the informing principle of matter. Hence many of them identified God with the ether which spreads itself over the exterior surface of the heavens; and this ethereal substance they imagined contained the vital principles from which all forms of existence are produced, but not by the will of a creator, but by necessity of nature. If to them Reason or God was underived, so also was the matter of the universe. By no sect was the doctrine of absolute fate more thoroughly adopted than by the Stoics. As they invariably represent it, a necessary chain of causes and effects encircles the whole universe, the divine reason and material things alike. "Whatever that be," says Seneca, "which has determined our lives and our deaths, it binds the gods also by the same necessity. Human and divine things alike are carried along in an irrevocable course." *

* "Quidquid est quod nos sic vivere jussit sic mori, eadem neces-

Large and just exception must be taken to the doctrine of this school on the subject of moral excellence, its foundation, its nature, and its laws. Piety towards God, as they described it, is little else than a callous surrender to irresistible fate; self-government is crucifixion of the best affections of the heart; the highest crime against God and against nature, self-destruction, is vindicated, and, in certain circumstances, even commanded as a duty; and benevolence, instead of being generous love, is devotion to an abstract idea, a cold calculation, an act of homage to reason. The human race is a unity, of which no part can be injured without evil to all the rest; and such injury, therefore, they argued, it is the part of wisdom to prevent or remedy. The obvious tendency of some parts of the stoical system was to nourish pride, to create heartlessness, and even hypocrisy, and to make men unnatural and artificial. The virtuous Stoic was proudly and coldly strong, was superior to pleasure and pain, would relieve the afflicted, and protect himself against personal injury, but would, at the same time, repress all pity for others, and all sorrow on his own account.

But in spite of numerous and serious errors, the

sitate et Deos alligat. Irrevocabilis humana pariter ac divina cursus vehit."—SENECA, *Op. Parisiis*, 1761, p. 78.

ethical system of the Stoics was wonderfully grand, and wonderfully pure. When we think of principles like the following—"that the highest end of life is to contemplate truth, and to obey the Eternal Reason and the immutable law of the universe; that God is to be revered above all beings, to be acknowledged in all events, and to be universally submitted to; that the noblest office of wisdom is to subject the passions, dispositions, and conduct to reason and virtue; that virtue is the supreme good, and is to be pursued for its own sake, and not from fear or from hope; that it is sufficient for happiness, and is seated only in the mind, and being so, renders men independent of all external events, and happy in every condition; that the consciousness of well-doing is reward enough without the applause or approbation of others, without even their knowledge of our good deeds; and that no prospect of self-indulgence, and no fear of loss, or pain, or death, must be suffered to turn us aside from truth and virtue;"—when we hear such principles as these distinctly maintained by the sages of this school, it is impossible to withhold from them our admiration, or to repress a profound feeling of thankfulness to the Great God. These are some of the redeeming features of the stoical morality, which rendered it incomparably superior to all the ancient systems, with one wonderful exception, the system of

which Socrates was the founder and Plato the chief expositor.*

VI. Upwards of a hundred years earlier than the time of Zeno, Socrates questioned, perplexed, stimulated, and instructed the people of Athens. His name, and that of his disciple Plato, are associated with what is justly regarded as the most luminous and refreshing passage of ancient profane history, whether as it respects philosophy or as it respects religion. The philosophy of Plato differs in form, still more in its details, and especially in its completeness and refinement, from that of Socrates; but in ethics and religion the master and the disciple are entirely identified; and it would be idle to attempt to distinguish between them.

About the time of Christ, or shortly afterwards, a profound interest in the doctrines of Socrates and Plato was awakened throughout the Jewish world,

* In the *Enchiridion* of Epictetus, and in his lectures (both compiled by his disciple Arrian), and in the writings of Seneca, especially his *De Providentiâ*, *De Sapientis Constantiâ*, *De Brevitate Vitæ*, and *De Vitâ Beatâ*, the errors and the excellences of Stoicism are fully discovered. Very touchingly, also, are we brought into contact with the system, as a personal experience, in the Meditations of Aurelius ("Marci Antonini Imperatoris, eorum quæ ad seipsum, libri XII." Oxon. 1704), especially lib. iv. cap. 10. 24. 29. 33, 34. 41. 44, 45; also in some parts of the *Noctes Atticæ* of Aulus Gellius.

by the writings of Philo of Alexandria. These writings are a compound of Judaism, Orientalism, and Platonism; but the Platonic element very decidedly predominates. It may be safely pronounced impossible, that Jesus of Nazareth can have been acquainted with the works of the Alexandrian Jew. It is quite incapable of proof, and is most improbable that any of these works were even in existence in the lifetime of Christ. If they were, it can have been only a short while; and nothing is more unlikely than that Jesus, in an obscure village, and in the position of a working man, had even heard of them, far less examined them. The fact, however, is interesting, and it directly bears on our investigation, that not only the Gentile, but even the Jewish world during the primitive age of Christianity, was familiar with the system of Socrates and Plato.

It is not necessary here to point out the defects and errors of that system. They are confessedly important and numerous. For example, Socrates distinctly maintained the pre-existence of human souls, before their entrance into the bodies of the present race of men. He taught also the transmigration of souls—at least their possible occupation of other bodies after the death of those they now inhabit—and, as the punishment of their vice, their occupation of the bodies of irrational animals. It must be

mitted further, that his reasonings on the immortality of the soul are not seldom as unsatisfactory as they are subtle and refined. And then, the last words which he uttered, desiring that an offering he had vowed to Esculapius might be paid by his friends, are a melancholy testimony against him. It was clearly his conviction, that a wise and good man ought to worship the gods recognised by the country to which he belonged.* His faith in a plurality of objects of worship was undisguised and sincere; but it is at the same time as certain that he recognised and adored a Supreme God, the Almighty Creator and Ruler; and he speaks of this Being in language which may well excite astonishment. "He, who arranges and upholds the universe, who is the fountain of all that is beautiful and good, and who, for the use of His creatures, maintains the creation always uninjured, entire, and undecaying; . . . this Being, conducting these affairs, is invisible to us, yet is made manifest by the grandeur of His operations."†

* Hence Xenophon expresses his amazement that Socrates was charged with denying the gods of Athens, as if nothing could be more utterly groundless: *ὡς οὐκ ἐνόμιζεν οὓς ἡ πόλις νομίζει θεοὺς ποίῳ ποτ' ἐχρήσαντο τεκμηρίῳ;*—*Comment.* lib. i. cap. 1, 2. Berol. 1845

† *ὁ τὸν ὅλον κόσμον συντάττων τε καὶ συνέχων, ἐν ᾧ πάντα τὰ καλὰ καὶ ἀγαθά ἐστι, καὶ ἀεὶ μὲν χρωμένοις ἀτριβῆ τε καὶ ὑγιᾶ καὶ ἀγήρατον παρέχων. . . . οὗτος τὰ μέγιστα μὲν πράττων ὁρᾶται, τάδε δὲ οἰκονομῶν ἀόρατος ἡμῖν ἐστιν.*—*Comment.* lib. iv. cap. 3, 13.

Socrates maintained that the first principles of morality, which are common to all mankind, are laws of the Supreme; and the distinction between them and mere human laws he finds in the fact, that they can never be transgressed with impunity. "They who violate the laws established by the gods suffer a penalty which it is not possible to escape in any such way, as some who violate the laws established by men are able to escape the consequences of transgression." *

The life of Socrates must not be overlooked, when attempting, in however brief a manner, to understand and estimate his system. The testimony of those who knew him best is unshaken by all the efforts that have been made to overthrow it; and there is no sufficient reason to doubt that he was a sincere, upright, disinterested man, and, withal, singularly pious, according to the light he had received. His disciple and intimate friend, Xenophon, declares that he never undertook any work without first asking counsel of the gods. A sense of God, a strong faith in the influence of God, and a deep desire to be governed by it, were habitual to his soul; and, in all probability, this is the amount of what he intended to

* ἀλλ' οὖν δίκην γέ τοι διδόασιν οἱ παραβαίνοντες τοὺς ὑπὸ τῶν θεῶν κειμένους νόμους, ἣν οὐδενὶ τρόπῳ δυνατὸν ἀνθρώπῳ διαφυγεῖν, ὥσπερ τοὺς ὑπὸ ἀνθρώπων κειμένους νόμους ἔνιοι παραβαίνοντες διαφεύγουσι τὸ δικὴν διδόναι.—*Comment*, lib. iv. cap. 4, 21.

convey, when he constantly and openly referred to a demon—a presiding spirit within him—whose voice he had heard and obeyed from his childhood. The idea on which the public life of this man was founded, is unusually impressive. The youth of Athens had long been corrupted, as he thought, by a class of instructors who set little value on what they taught or others believed, but great value on dialectic power and rhetorical art, by means of which even falsehood might be commended to the minds of men. Socrates resolved to lift up goodness and truth, in themselves, as the noblest end of living; and to show that the office of philosophy was to deliver mankind from the dominion of prejudice, ignorance, and vice, to inspire them with the love of virtue, and, through a careful intellectual and moral discipline, to guide them to happiness. His position, from the first, was that of a philosophic moralist; and, choosing Athens as his sphere, he devoted his life to the diffusion of what he believed to be the highest truth. His entire time was spent in this work; he sought for scholars, not only among men of rank, but also among labourers and mechanics; and, contrary to the general practice in that day, he exacted no remuneration from those who attached themselves to his school. "It does not accord with what is usual among men," he says, in his memorable defence, "that I have

neglected all that belongs to myself, and have tolerated for so many years this neglect of my private affairs. Your concerns, on the other hand, I have constantly attended to, appealing to you individually, like a father or an elder brother, and urging you to the cultivation of virtue. If, indeed, I had gained anything by this means, and had accepted payment for my exhortations, there might have been some reason for my conduct; . . . . . it appears to me that I offer proof sufficient that I am speaking truly, when I name my poverty."* The man who thus spoke was often persecuted by the vicious and the false in the course of his life. "You, my fellow-citizens," he said, appealing to themselves for the truth of his statements, "have been unable to tolerate my manners and my words; they have grown ever more and more oppressive and hateful to you, so that you now long to be relieved from them."† At last he was condemned to death; and for this reason

* *οὐ γὰρ ἀνθρωπίνῳ ἔοικε τὸ ἐμὲ τῶν μὲν ἐμαυτοῦ ἁπάντων ἠμεληκέναι, καὶ ἀνέχεσθαι τῶν οἰκείων ἀμελουμένων τοσαῦτα ἤδη ἔτη, τὸ δὲ ὑμέτερον πράττειν ἀεὶ, ἰδίᾳ ἑκάστῳ προσιόντα ὥσπερ πατέρα ἢ ἀδελφὸν πρεσβύτερον, πείθοντα ἐπιμελεῖσθαι ἀρετῆς. καὶ εἰ μέντοι τι ἀπὸ τούτων ἀπέλαυον, καὶ μισθὸν λαμβάνων, ταῦτα παρεκελευόμην, εἶχον ἄν τινα λόγον. . . . . ἱκανόν γὰρ οἶμαι, ἐγὼ παρέχομαι τὸν μάρτυρα ὡς ἀληθῆ λέγω, τὴν πενίαν.—Apol. Soc. in Plat. Oper.* tom. i. p. 63. Lipsiæ, 1829.

† *ὑμεῖς μὲν ὄντες πολῖταί μου, οὐχ οἷοί τ' ἐγένεσθε ἐνεγκεῖν τὰς ἐμὰς διατριβὰς καὶ τοὺς λόγους, ἀλλ' ὑμῖν βαρύτεραι γεγόνασι καὶ ἐπιφθονώτεραι ὥστε ζητεῖτε αὐτῶν νυνὶ ἀπαλλαγῆναι.—Idem,* p. 72.

chiefly, whatever the ostensible grounds might be, that his fellow-citizens could no longer endure his merited rebukes.

The defence of Socrates, followed as it was by his death, is perhaps the most remarkable, all circumstances considered, of human productions. He describes the aim of his life:—"I pass my time, doing nothing but persuade you, both young and old, to care so earnestly neither for the body, nor for treasures, nor for any other thing, as for the soul, by what means it may be ennobled in the highest degree."* He announces his settled resolution, whatever it may cost:—"O Athenians, I esteem and love you, but I shall obey God rather than you; and while I live, and as far as lies in me, I shall never cease philosophising, or urging and remonstrating with whomsoever I may meet, in the very same terms I have been wont to use."† He presents a confession of his faith on a most important subject:—"I declare that the highest good to man is this, to spend every day in forming opinions respecting virtue and other

* οὐδὲν γὰρ ἄλλο πράττων ἐγὼ περιέρχομαι ἢ πείθων ὑμῶν καὶ νεωτέρους καὶ πρεσβυτέρους, μήτε σωμάτων ἐπιμελεῖσθαι, μήτε χρημάτων πρότερον μήτε ἄλλου τινὸς, οὕτω σφόδρα ὡς τῆς ψυχῆς, ὅπως ὡς ἀρίστη ἔσται.—*Apol.* p. 61.

† ἐγὼ ὑμᾶς, ὦ ἄνδρες Ἀθηναῖοι, ἀπάζομαι μὲν καὶ φίλω, πείσομαι δὲ τῷ θεῷ μᾶλλον ἢ ὑμῖν, καὶ ἕωσπερ ἂν ἐμπνέω καὶ οἷός τε ὦ, οὐ μὴ παύσομαι φιλοσοφῶν, καὶ ὑμῖν παρακελευόμενός τε καὶ ἐνδεικνύμενος, ὅτῳ ἂν ἀεὶ ἐντυγχάνω ὑμῶν λέγων οἱάπερ εἴωθα.—*Idem*, p. 60.

subjects, such as you have heard me discussing, scrutinising both myself and others; and that a life without inquiry is no life for man."*

After the sentence of death had been pronounced, he tells his judges that he might have escaped had he employed another method of defence. But he adds:—"It is no matter of regret to me now, that I have defended myself in this manner, but I should much prefer death from taking this course, to life on that ground (that is, having followed any other course). . . . . This truly is hard, O Athenians, to escape death; but it is far more difficult to avoid wickedness."† "You therefore, O my judges, ought to be hopeful in reference to death, and to keep in mind this one truth, that there is nothing evil to a good man, whether in life or in death, nor are the matters which concern him neglected by the gods."‡ "I am not at all incensed against those who have

* λέγω ὅτι καὶ τυγχάνει μέγιστον ἀγαθὸν ὂν ἀνθρώπῳ τοῦτο, ἑκάστης ἡμέρας περὶ ἀρετῆς τοὺς λόγους ποιεῖσθαι, καὶ τῶν ἄλλων περὶ ὧν ὑμεῖς ἐμοῦ ἠκούετε διαλεγομένου, καὶ ἐμαυτὸν καὶ ἄλλους ἐξετάζοντος, ὁ δὲ ἀνεξέταστος βίος, οὐ βιωτὸς ἀνθρώπῳ.—*Apol.* p. 71.

† οὔτε νύν μοι μεταμέλει οὕτως ἀπολογησαμένῳ, ἀλλὰ πολὺ μᾶλλον αἱροῦμαι ὧδε ἀπολογησάμενος τεθνάναι ἢ ἐκείνως ζῆν. . . . . τοῦτ' ἤ χαλεπὸν, ὦ ἄνδρες Ἀθηναῖοι, θάνατον ἐκφύγειν, ἀλλὰ πολὺ χαλεπώτερον πονηρίαν.—*Idem*, p. 74.

‡ ἀλλὰ καὶ ὑμᾶς χρὴ, ὦ ἄνδρες δικασταὶ, εὐέλπιδας εἶναι πρὸς τὸν θάνατον, καὶ ἕν τι τοῦτο διανοεῖσθαι ἀληθες, ὅτι οὐκ ἔστιν ἀνδρὶ ἀγαθῷ κακὸν οὐδὲν οὔτε ζῶντι οὔτε τελευτήσαντι, οὐδὲ ἀμελεῖται ὑπὸ θεῶν τὰ τούτου πράγματα.—*Idem*, p. 79.

condemned me, or my accusers."* "If one, arriving at Hades, shall be set free from so-called judges, and shall find righteous judges, ... would this be distressing banishment? . . . . For my part, I should be willing to die often, if this be true."†

After his condemnation, awaiting the hour of his martyrdom, Socrates spoke in such language as the following, to the friends who continued their faithful attendance upon him:—"It would be ridiculous for a man who during his life has habituated himself to live like one who was very near to death, to be afterwards distressed when this event (which he had long anticipated) actually overtook him. . . . . Shall one who verily loves wisdom, and entertains the strong hope that he shall find that which deserves this name nowhere except in Hades,—shall such a man, instead of rejoicing to depart, be afflicted at dying?"‡ "Does not the soul thus conditioned

* ἔγωγε τοῖς καταψηφισαμένοις μου καὶ τοῖς κατηγόροις οὐ πάνυ χαλεπαίνω.—*Apol.* p. 79.

† εἰ γάρ τις ἀφικόμενος εἰς ἅδου, ἀπαλλαγεὶς τουτωνὶ τῶν φασκόντων δικαστῶν εἶναι, εὑρήσει τοὺς ὡς ἀληθῶς δικαστὰς, ... ἆρα φαύλη ἂν εἴη ἡ ἀποδημία. . . . . ἐγὼ μὲν γὰρ πολλάκις ἐθέλω τεθνάναι, εἰ ταῦτά ἐστιν ἀληθῆ.—*Idem*, pp. 77, 78.

‡ γελοῖον ἂν εἴη, ἄνδρα παρασκευάζονθ' ἑαυτὸν ἐν τῷ βίῳ ὅτι ἐγγυτάτω ὄντα τοῦ τεθνάναι οὕτω ζῆν, κἄπειθ' ἥκοντος αὐτῷ τούτου, ἀγανακτεῖν. . . . . φρονήσεως δὲ ἆρα τις τῷ ὄντι ἐρῶν, καὶ λαβὼν σφόδρα τὴν αὐτὴν ταύτην ἐλπίδα, μηδαμοῦ ἄλλοθι ἐντεύξεσθαι αὐτῇ ἀξίως λόγου, ἢ ἐν ἅδου, ἀγανακτήσει τε ἀποθνήσκων, καὶ οὐκ ἄσμενος εἶσιν αὐτόσε.—*Phædo in Plat. Oper.* ut supra, tom. i. pp. 116, 117.

(the wise and good soul) depart to that which is congenial to its nature, to the unseen, the divine, the undying, and the wise? Arriving there (in Hades), its lot is to be blessed, to be emancipated from error and ignorance, and fears, and wild appetites, and all other earthly evils; and, as is said in reference to the initiated, truly does it spend the remainder of existence with the gods." *

These were the words of a heathen, nearly five hundred years before the advent of Jesus Christ, of a man who had never seen a line of written revelation, so called, and could have had no knowledge of the existence of such a thing; a man who lived in the very centre of polytheism, who was himself a child and an avowed disciple of polytheism, and who to the last religiously observed the worship of inferior divinities. His name and that of Plato, and the names also of Zeno, and Epictetus, and Seneca, and Antoninus, have come down to our times associated with the sentiments which have been quoted. The hope is not vain that, in that dark day, and beneath all the polluting

* οὕκουν οὕτω μὲν ἔχουσα εἰς τὸ ὁμοῖον αὐτῇ τὸ ἀειδὲς ἀπέρχεται, τὸ θεῖόν τε καὶ ἀθάνατον καὶ φρονίμυν; οἳ ἀφικομένη ὑπάρχει αὐτῇ εὐδαίμονι εἶναι, πλάνης καὶ ἀγνοίας καὶ φόβων καὶ ἀγρίων ἐρώτων καὶ τῶν ἄλλων κακῶν τῶν ἀνθρωπειων ἀπηλλαγμένῃ· ὥσπερ δὲ λέγεται κατὰ τῶν μεμυημένων, ὡς ἀληθῶς τὸν λοιπὸν χρόνον μετὰ θεῶν διάγουσα.—*Phædo in Plat. Oper.* p. 138.

shadows of paganism, there may have been many like to these sages, of whom no record has descended. Above all, we can believe that there may have been multitudes of the obscurer classes on whom the influence of Socrates, Plato, and others came down as a healing and purifying power. The hope is inexpressibly refreshing to the Christian soul. God, who for the sake of the world, and in order to preserve to it the truth which it had well-nigh lost, conferred singular distinction on Judea, had not abandoned the rest of mankind, but drew near to them also, in His secret illuminations, and in His sanctifying agencies. The Holy Ghost, that touched the soul of Hebrew prophets and teachers, also brooded over the spiritual chaos of the old pagan world, so that gleams of Divine light flashed many times across the deep of ignorance and moral evil. It enhances the value of ancient Holy Scripture, it even adds a new significance to it, when we come to know that, far away from its sphere, the erring soul of man was always struggling towards the source of light, and that from the Uncreated Sun there fell upon it many a sanctifying and guiding ray. The direct and special provision for the coming of the promised Saviour of men, which was made in the Jewish institutions and worship, becomes not less, but more precious, when we understand that, at the same time, over all the world, in the efforts of

human reason, the agitations of the human conscience, and the ceaseless tumult of human affairs, God was conducting, by the merciful influence of His Spirit, a more general preparation for the same grand event. To the Spirit of the living God, striving with man everywhere and always, must be traced whatever moral goodness and holy truth sprung up in the ungenial soil of ancient paganism. The fact of such Divine striving recognised, our first feeling is unfeigned thankfulness to God; the second is deep sympathy with human souls in the day of the world's darkness, with wise, earnest, virtuous natures in the agony of their search after truth, and in the burden of uncertainty, disappointment, and fear by which they were often crushed. In the number of these ancient spiritual heroes, none wiser or nobler shall we find than Socrates and his illustrious disciple. In their case we recognise with joy a merciful agency of God. Instead of seeking to depreciate the recorded sayings of the Athenian sage, we acknowledge with wonder that, in some of the highest regions of moral inquiry, they embody an amount of truth which, in justice to humanity, to spiritual providence, and to the very office of Christ, Christians above all men are bound to understand and extol.

But, by the side of the best of all the ancient systems of morality and religion, we are prepared to

place the teaching of Jesus of Nazareth, and, with this view, we shall first recall, in the briefest form, the chief subjects of that teaching.

"A universal spiritual reign; the reign of rectitude, purity, wisdom, truth, love, and peace; the reign of God in the understanding, conscience, heart, and will of men." "Human sin, Divine pardon." "Prayer." "Providence." "Worship." "Human virtue grounded in piety towards God." "Among the essential elements of virtue,—humility, meekness, forgivingness, pure love, self-sacrifice." "Piety and virtue, a true life of God in the soul." "Spiritual truth received into the soul, the seed of this Divine life, and the germ of the reign of God in man."

Yet more specially: "The doctrine of the human soul, its reality, greatness, accountability, and endless life." "The doctrine of God, His Spirituality, Unity, Moral Perfection, and Paternity." "The doctrine of the reconciliation of the soul and God; God in His holy mercy looking upon the soul; and the soul, in penitence, faith, and filial obedience, yielding itself to God."

This enumeration is almost enough; there are doctrines here of inexpressible importance, perfectly original. To name no others, those of sin and pardon, of virtue (as summed up in pure love, in sacrifice and service for others), of an ever-brightening and

holy immortality, and of God's fatherhood, have no place in the sayings of the Athenian philosopher. Altogether, here are an originality, a consistency, a living energy, a grandeur, and a depth, which can be found nowhere else. Socrates and Plato astonish us by the utterance of imperishable and grand ideas; but they are not only few in number, they are unconnected. Christ offers to the world an extended and harmonious multitude of spiritual doctrines. He, too, is the only teacher who always speaks with certainty and precision. The disciples of Socrates were often left in deep perplexity by their master. One occasion may be instanced; when he was conducting a discussion with two of their number respecting the immortality of the soul. "They (that is, Socrates, and Cebes, and Simmias) seemed to disturb us afresh, though we had been fully convinced by the previous arguments, and to plunge us again into unbelief." * This was the frequent experience of the best men in the ancient world, in reference to the most vital questions, on which at other times we find them expressing the utmost certainty. Even Socrates often employed such ambiguous language as the following: "If death be a removal hence to another place, and if

* ὑπὸ τοῦ ἔμπροσθεν λόγου σφόδρα πεπεισμένους ἡμᾶς πάλιν ἐδόκουν ἀναταράξαι καὶ εἰς ἀπιστίαν καταβαλεῖν.—*Phædo in Plat. Oper.* tom. i. p. 150.

what is said of the dead be true,"—"those who live there (that is, in Hades) are thenceforth immortal,—if at least what is said be true." The concluding words of his apology were these:—"But the hour of separation has now come; I go to die, you to live; but which of us is destined to an improved being is concealed from every one except God." * On the great subjects of futurity, the soul and God, Socrates often utters profound and imperishable truth; but even on these, as well as less momentous questions, he sometimes exhibits lamentable hesitation and doubt. The teaching of Jesus Christ, on the other hand, is a region of unclouded and serene light. From the first, a deep conviction is awakened that here is perfect knowledge and faith which cannot be shaken. Christ reveals many truths unheard before; but both on these, and on such as may be found elsewhere, He exhibits unwavering certainty. On all the great subjects of His ministry, His utterances are determinate and uniform. Not a shadow even of hesitation rests for a moment on His language. The conflict of other minds between faith and doubt He knew not; but however high the subject and environed with difficulties, He spoke with absolute but

* ἀλλὰ γὰρ ἤδη ὥρα ἀπιέναι, ἐμοὶ μὲν ἀποθανουμένῳ, ὑμῖν δὲ βιωσομένοις. ὁπότεροι δὲ ἡμῶν ἔρχονται ἐπὶ ἄμεινον πρᾶγμα, ἄδηλον παντὶ πλὴν ἢ τῷ θεῷ.—*Apol.* tom. i. p. 79.

meek assurance. Always and everywhere, He spoke with absolute but meek assurance.

Christ also is the only teacher who always expresses himself, not only without doubt, but without effort. Socrates and Plato reach some lofty and holy thoughts, but it is with great labour, and after protracted and severe study. Jesus Christ utters the highest truths with perfect facility, and presents them in familiar and simple language. He has needed no laborious and prolonged search, He employs no severity of argument, and gives no sign of effort. Truth is native to His soul, and His words are the immediate and natural and unlaboured outpourings of the fulness of His mind.

We are constrained to ask, Who was this Jesus Christ? what could He be, that even the sage of Athens suffers by comparison with Him? While this question waits solution, differences between Christ and Socrates and Plato, still wider and more startling than those which have been named, crowd upon the mind.

First.—Socrates must have laboured thirty or forty years as a teacher of philosophy, and Plato a still longer period, both ever necessarily increasing their power, as well of acquiring as of communicating truth. Jesus Christ laboured only three years.

Second.—Socrates had advanced to the middle

period of life before he assumed the position of a public guide, and he was in his seventieth year when he died. Plato also took no part in forming the minds of others till he had reached middle life, and he was in his eighty-first year when he died. Jesus Christ was only thirty-three when He was cut off, quite a young man.

Third. — Socrates, before he ventured to teach, spent many consecutive years under the most celebrated philosophers then in Greece, in studying all the branches of learning with which that age was conversant. Plato, having before been taught by other celebrated masters, was for eight years a pupil of Socrates. After the death of Socrates, he spent many years in travelling into various and remote countries, in pursuit of knowledge in all its branches, conversing with the priests of Egypt, perhaps even the sages of India, certainly the philosophers of Italy and Greece. Jesus Christ was never beyond the limits of Judea in His life. He had access to no famous school and to no celebrated masters in His own or other countries. The common amount of education He may have received, and for the rest He wrought with His hands to gain His daily bread. In place of study, there was only manual labour up to the time when He began to teach the world.

The question must be renewed, and with an ear-

nestness yet more intense, Who was this Jesus Christ? The three points of contrast just named between Him and Socrates and Plato, do not exhaust his history. The whole of the outer conditions of His earthly life, even at the risk of repetition, must be deliberately placed before our minds. Jesus was a man of Nazareth, in Galilee of Judea, whom no hint of the learning and science of other lands and of the discoveries and speculations of the world's sages, could by any possibility have reached. He was a man of humble origin; His parents, His relatives, His associates, were all poor, and He himself was poor, to the last very poor. He was a working carpenter, and had spent His life in a workshop till He was thirty years of age. He had enjoyed no advantages of education, of access to books, or of introduction to superior society, but such as were open to the lowest of the people. He was unaided by the patronage of the wise or the great. He was a young man who died at the age of thirty-three. But this person, in a ministry of three years, did infinitely more for mankind and for all succeeding ages, than either Socrates or Plato, or both together, were able to do, each with the labour of thirty or forty years, with all their maturity of wisdom and experience, and with all the advantages of learning, and travel, and patronage. What the wisest and brightest souls in the ancient world,

what even the inspired prophets of Israel never accomplished, was accomplished by a young, obscure, Galilean mechanic.

Even if the teaching of Jesus Christ had been inferior in substance and in form to that of Socrates and Plato, the overwhelming differences between Him and them which have been named, would yet have defied all the ordinary methods and means of interpretation. But how much more, when that teaching is not inferior, when it has been proved to be incomparably superior! It exhibits doctrines infinitely momentous which were unknown in Athens and in Rome. What is still more, it may be affirmed without misgiving, that of all the spiritual truth existing in the world at this moment, not only is there not a single important idea which is not found in the words of Christ, but all the most important ideas can be found nowhere else, and have their sole fountain in His mind. From His mind there shone a light which neither Egypt, nor India, nor Greece, nor Rome, had ever kindled, which no age before His day ever saw, and none since, except in Him alone, has ever seen.

These, then, are the simple historical facts of Christ's state on earth, on the one hand, and of His work among men, on the other hand; and they demand interpretation. The supposition that He was

merely a messenger and prophet of God, a man divinely selected and furnished for a Godlike work, does not satisfy, never can satisfy, the extraordinary conditions of the case. The world has heard the voice of many God-sent men, the organs through which imperishable truth, in various amounts, has been conveyed; but not one of these can, on any just ground, be likened for a moment to Jesus Christ. We have found that He is not merely different from them, but, in the most material respects, incomparably above them all. Hence an explication which is perfectly reasonable and adequate in their case, is palpably insufficient, is unsatisfactory and useless, in His case. He stands unapproachably distant from all that ever were honoured with a Divine mission; He is not a link in a chain of succession, but is absolutely alone, and has no predecessor and no successor. The multitude, the originality, the harmony, and the grandeur of His revelations, separate Him, by an impassable line, from all that arose before His time; and the fact, that in two thousand years not a single important contribution has been added to the body of spiritual truth which He left, cuts off all succession. He is alone in that work, immeasurably transcending all others in human history, which He achieved for the world; alone in the unexampled circumstances amidst which He accom-

plished it; circumstances which, according to all human modes of judging, seemed to render the accomplishment absolutely impossible. Therefore must He be alone in constitution of being, in attributes and in nature; organically, essentially alone.

The work of Christ and the outer conditions of His life, as these have been represented by us—that is to say, the age and place in which He appeared, His early death, and His entire social circumstances and position—the work of Christ and the outer conditions of His life must be capable of being harmonized, in thought, for they were combined in fact. All admit, and are compelled to admit, that they were combined in fact. Scepticism is baseless, is impossible here. There stands the record; say nothing of its inspiration so called, but its antiquity and general authenticity are indubitable,—are, in point of fact, undoubted by all who have the slightest pretensions to learning or candour. There, in the record, is the teaching, incomparable, alone. It is connected with the name of Jesus, it came from His mind; if not, whence did it, could it come? To attribute it to the writers of the New Testament themselves makes no alteration in the difficulty, except to increase it indefinitely by the addition of new and more inexplicable circumstances. Among all concerned, the only individual to whose mind, with any show of reason, the teaching can be

ascribed, is Jesus himself. Certainly He was the teacher, if there was a teacher at all; and no subtlety of criticism, and no mythical theory, and no modification of it, can set aside this fact. He, being what we have seen He was, in His external circumstances and history, was the teacher; in other words, the work of Christ among men, and the outer conditions of His life, were combined in fact; and, therefore, it can admit of no question that they must be capable of being harmonized in principle. But we repeat, that on all ordinary and accepted grounds they are utterly irreconcilable. No other record of history or of individual experience, and no known law of the soul, lends us any assistance in this case. What we have to interpret, since it was actually realized and presented to the senses of men, is nevertheless directly in the face of all other history, of experience, and of psychology. Hence we maintain, and have no resource but to maintain, that the principle of harmony in this instance must be sought for in a region altogether new and extraordinary—a region which ordinary history, experience, and psychology do not include. There must be some profound mystery in the very constitution of this Unique Personality, to account for such teaching as His, in such circumstances as His. He cannot be merely human, because human laws and human experiences do not

interpret the formation of His life. He must be essentially and organically separate from man, because the facts of His history transcend immeasurably all that mere man ever accomplished or attained.

There are difficulties which every thoughtful mind must recognise, when the attempt is made to connect the teaching of Jesus Christ with the outer conditions of His life: the difficulties are real, great, undeniable; and the question is, how shall they be best solved—which of the professed or possible solutions is most rational, most satisfactory? In the outset, one thing is clear, that the Supreme Being must not be supposed to be limited, either in His choice of instruments to work out His purposes, or in His mode of employing their agency. Granting that there never was such another human messenger of eternal truth as Jesus Christ, it does not follow, from this alone, that Jesus Christ was more than human. He who created the mind of man can impart His revelations to it in different measures and forms, and can act upon it in very different ways, when He pleases to use it, as the organ through which He shall teach the world. Successive and sudden inspirations, rising one above another in amount and in kind, in a manner which it would be hard to limit, are in this way conceivable and possible. We can imagine the human mind almost passive in the Divine hand, as

in a kind of intellectual ecstasy or rapture—active, indeed, in receiving, and afterwards in conveying, what is imparted to it; but, for the time, its power so held down and absorbed in the state of mere receptivity, that it shall itself need, in common with others, to investigate, in order to understand, the messages of truth which it has announced. It is believed that the ancient seers of Israel were sometimes mere organs through which inspirations passed from God to mankind, and were sometimes themselves as ignorant as others of the deep significance of their own utterances. Such a thing is not in itself inconceivable, and it is not irreconcilable with the experiences and laws of the soul; but it can afford us no help in solving the mystery of Christ's teaching. He was not a mere and almost passive channel of conveyance from God to man. He was not an instrument employed on certain special occasions, which occasions having passed away, the instrument remained the same as before, unpenetrated by any change arising from the temporary purpose to which it had been applied. He was not an occasional, spasmodic, or ecstatic utterer of Divine messages; but during His whole ministry, though its period was short, He was a free, intelligent, deliberate utterer of truth which was His own, howsoever it had come to Him. If there be one thing

more certain than another, it is, that Jesus spoke from Himself, out of the depths of His own being. Whoever was His teacher, whatever was the hidden process of instruction through which He had been conducted, and wherever might be the true source of His knowledge, that knowledge was His, truly His, dwelling in His understanding, His conscience, and His heart. That which He uttered to men had first become His own, inwoven with the very texture of His soul, identified with its truest possessions, its freest movements, its progressive developments. It was not imposed at the moment by another, it was not an immediate impartation to Him from without, but a true creation from within, a produce of His own. His soul had risen to the truth which He announced, had mastered it, had verily become it; so that not merely the glory of proclaiming it fell to Jesus, but all the inward opulence and power which the real knowledge of it supposed belonged to His mind.

We assert, without fear of contradiction by any competent and candid thinker, that under the conditions amidst which Jesus was placed, such knowledge and such spiritual opulence and power were morally and even physically impossible to a mere human mind. God never acts in defiance of the nature and laws of the soul, but always in harmony with them: we speak with reverence, God could not act in defiance of those laws of the soul which He

has Himself established. This is not the region of miracle, so called; and mere physical omnipotence has no place here. Mind is not to be forced. God could destroy the soul; but, continuing to be what it is, God can act upon it only in harmony with its laws. Now, the fact that a young man only thirty-three, a poor man, a Galilean carpenter, uneducated, unprivileged, and unpatronised, rose to a profound, far-reaching, lofty wisdom, and to an illumination and wealth of soul which are without example in history, stands in direct contradiction to all other psychological experiences, and to all ascertained psychological laws. But it is a fact, nevertheless; and there must be some ground on which it can be explained. Jesus cannot have been merely what He seemed to be, and His mind cannot have been merely human, and in all respects constituted and conditioned as other human minds are. In sober reason there is no choice left to us, but to believe in an organic, an essential, a constitutional difference between Him and all men; in an incarnation, in this unparalleled instance, of Divinity in humanity.* Admitting an original, incomprehensible union between the mind of Christ and God—admitting a mysterious and constant access of Christ's mind to the infinite Fountain of illumination, of excellence and of power such as was possible to no mere human

* See Note A at the end of this chapter.

being—then, but only then, we can account for spiritual phenomena which—all facts as they are—on no other ground are explicable or even believable. It is only by the admission of the real union of Divinity with the human soul of Jesus Christ that a solution can be found of historical and psychological difficulties, which are otherwise as insurmountable as they are undeniable. The idea of incarnation in all its meaning is, indeed, incomprehensible; but we can very distinctly comprehend that it must be true nevertheless, because, otherwise, facts of which we have the fullest evidence are absolutely unbelievable. The incarnation is a profound mystery; but intelligence and candour will allow that this is the very region where mystery was even to be looked for. We are compelled to believe that this mystery is a truth; because, if not, the marvellous phenomena of the life of Jesus, which we cannot deny, are not only a mystery, and one even more inscrutable and insurmountable, but a direct contradiction.

Our argument is to receive important confirmation from another region of the life of Jesus. But, even here, that life has supplied presumptive evidence amounting to the strongest proof, of a doctrine which, awfully deformed and corrupted indeed, has yet somehow found its way into most of the philosophies and religions of the world—the doctrine of Incarnation

God in man. "They shall call His name Emmanuel, which, being interpreted, is God with us."

Note A.

No other method of reconciling the facts seems to merit consideration. The notion that Jesus was more than man, yet not God in man, that He pre-existed as an angel, or as the first of creatures, we imagine, has passed away from all sober minds. It is purely hypothetical, it obviously encounters all the difficulty of the higher hypothesis, without reaching its peculiar grounds, or any of its compensating advantages; and we question if even a solitary supporter of it could be found in the present day. Few or none who are convinced that Jesus was not, and could not possibly be, merely man, will hesitate to adopt the conclusion, that He must have been God in man.

The case seems to stand thus: Jesus was a true man; that is, He had a true human body, and a true human mind. But He was not a mere man; the opulence, the grandeur, the force of His soul could not belong to a mere human soul; essentially, constitutionally, He was far above what was possible to man, as God has made him. To account for the spiritual possessions and powers of Jesus, we are compelled to believe in the indwelling of a higher nature in His human nature, in the union of a higher nature with His human nature. But be this supposed higher nature what it may, the difficulty, the mystery to our conception—the idea, namely, of the indwelling of one spiritual nature in another—is substantially the same. We gain nothing by imagining that this higher nature was angelic and not divine. And who besides has assured us that what was not possible to a mere human mind, was certainly possible to an angelic or to any created mind. We complicate the mystery not one jot; on the contrary, we satisfy, as they can no otherwise be satisfied, all the conditions of the case, when we maintain that that higher nature, which in Jesus Christ was mysteriously united with the human, was no less than Divine. This, also, whilst it harmonizes with the prophetic utterance of the Old Testament, and with the plainer language of the Christian writings, we shall find constituted the benignant and solemn response of Heaven to what all lands and all times have proclaimed to be the want of universal humanity—"God with us."

BOOK THE THIRD.

THE SPIRITUAL INDIVIDUALITY OF CHRIST.

IN SIX PARTS

PART I.—CHRIST'S ONENESS WITH GOD.

II.—THE FORMS OF HIS CONSCIOUSNESS.

III.—THE TOTALITY OF HIS MANIFESTATION BEFORE THE WORLD.

IV.—THE MOTIVE OF HIS LIFE.

V.—HIS IMMOVEABLE FAITH.

VI.—THE ARGUMENT FROM HIS CHARACTER TO HIS DIVINITY.

PART I.

CHRIST'S ONENESS WITH GOD.

COMMUNION BETWEEN CREATED AND UNCREATED MIND—HUMAN SIDE OF THE DOCTRINE—EFFORT TO CONCEIVE GOD—FAITH IN HIS NEARNESS TO US—IN HIS LOVE—SENSE OF DEPENDENCE—VENERATION—TRUST—GOD LISTENING AND RESPONDING TO THE SOUL—TO CHRIST, GOD THE GREATEST REALITY—CHRIST ALONE WITH GOD—ORIGINAL, HABITUAL UNION—WALKED WITH GOD.

REVIEW.

THE peculiar conditions of the earthly life of Jesus have now been examined. The time and place of His advent, His parentage, His social position, and His early death, strike the least reflecting, and give extraordinary significance to His subsequent history. We have looked, besides, at the more prominent and public developments of a life which formed itself under such peculiar conditions. The position to which Christ actually rose, His own idea of that position, the commencement of His public course, the qualities that marked His public appearances, and His teaching itself, contrasted with the speculations and discoveries of other lands and ages, were successively reviewed.

We presume now to venture still nearer to this mysterious personality. Advancing beyond His outward circumstances and His public life, we meditate a close inspection of His inner spiritual being, the sphere of His conscience and His soul. We seek to penetrate that holy place where, exposed to the eye of the Omniscient, lie all the hidden principles of the outward life. We seek to look within the veil, into the innermost chamber of that spiritual temple which the heart of Jesus inclosed; and with anxious impartiality and with devout fear, we approach the secrets of this untrodden region.

The proper spiritual individuality of Jesus Christ was evinced in His oneness with God, in the forms of His consciousness, in His manifestation before the world as a whole, in the motive of His life, and in His calm assurance of triumph. First of all, in His unexampled sympathy and harmony with God. Communion between the Uncreated and the created mind is a contested subject in the theological schools. We mingle not in the conflict, but venture to express the profound conviction that, if God be the Father of minds, then the idea is very rational and very refreshing that on the one hand He should mercifully regard His intelligent offspring, and be ready to converse with them; and, on the other hand, that they should seek to communicate with Him. But it is a

hard, ay an ever impossible effort, for the created mind even to conceive God, much more to commune with Him. A just and complete conception of God is impossible. The Infinite can never be contained within the finite. The utmost possible to us is to strive to approach, for we never can grasp in all its extent, the idea of a Nature, and of Excellence, whose duration is infinite; the idea of the Uncreated, All-creating Mind, the eternal dwelling and source of life, truth, love, and power. And even this striving after a humble approach to the conception of God is more than we can long endure. We are overwhelmed by our own poor thoughts, and can only bow down in helpless wonder, before Him who is past finding out. "It is high as heaven; what canst thou do? It is deeper than Hades; what canst thou know? The measure thereof is longer than the earth and broader than the sea."

To stretch towards the Infinite is the first effort; the second is to connect the Infinite with our personal sphere, our movements, interests, and destinies. Nothing is more certain, than that God is as cognizant of every human soul as if it alone existed in immensity. The changes in our outward condition, and all the passing shades of emotion and of volition within, must be instantly perceived by Him. His awful presence is unutterably near to us; the open

Infinite Eye gazes upon us every moment. When this faith is distinctly reached, life becomes invested with wondrous sanctity; but it is not enough. Does the Great Being who is so mysteriously near, also love the creatures He hath made? Perhaps the open Infinite Eye is cold as it is luminous, and in conducting the vast interests of the universe, God is indifferent to what is passing in individual minds, and heeds not whether they suffer or rejoice, or how they appeal to His throne. The conviction is indispensable, that the nature of God, in its relation to our minds, is essentially parental. How this conviction is legitimately reached, on what basis it must rest in order to be permanent and safe, cannot be shown in this place, but it must be reached. It must be believed that God is profoundly interested in the human soul; that the Eternal Father stands in the tenderest relation to that soul, and that Divine sympathy and Divine love are not less but more real than human sympathy and human love.

The mind of man in deep earnest stretching up towards the infinite God, believing in His mysterious nearness and in His love, presumes to utter itself before Him. At such a moment, the first feeling is one of absolute dependence. We are in the very condition, to trace back existence, preservation, and all good for the present or for the eternal life, to the

Uncreated Source. Along with this sense of dependence, there is deep veneration; not simply love, but such love as finds its proper object only in God—love mingled with awe, love taking its very highest form, the form of reverence. There is superadded to reverence, simple trust, trust in parental love commanding infinite resources; the confiding look and confiding heart of a child. The mind of man gazing up to the Infinite Nature with mingled dependence, reverence, and trust, opens and utters itself to Omniscience.

This is the human side of communion, but there is here, as yet, no interchange. There is outgoing from below, but no response from above. On earth the communion of one human mind with another is profoundly mysterious, and it is far more rare than we imagine. Intercourse by looks, words, and acts is universal; but real mental fellowship, communion of intellect with intellect, conscience with conscience, heart with heart,—communion of soul with soul,—is excessively rare. It is always and necessarily imperfect. The real and great differences between one soul and another, and the consequent proportional defect of sympathy between them, mental and moral incapacity and poverty on the one side or the other, or on both in different respects, constitutional or acquired reserve, shame, pride, and fear, necessarily

prevent the entireness and the freedom of communion. But such as it is, it is real, and there are palpable expressions and tokens of it, and a palpable medium through which it is conducted. There is no palpable medium of intercourse between the human soul and God, and on the side of God there are no palpable expressions and tokens of its reality. The region belongs to pure faith; we only believe that God is responding to us; that is literally all. But this faith is rational, and it is purifying and exalting. If one human soul welcomes and answers the utterances of another, it is morally certain that the Eternal Father will meet the advances of His own child. God must perceive every movement of the soul towards Himself, and can we doubt that in His pity and His love He will greet the rising aspiration? The belief is in harmony with the highest reason, that the Uncreated responds to the created mind, pours illumination, breathes down peace, and sheds forth living and healing influences. Divine fellowship is the selectest and most solemn of all mysteries. It is a blessed moment in the earthly history of a spirit, when it seeks an audience of God, and believes that God is mercifully listening and responding to it. This is heaven on earth, an earnest of the highest dignities and the noblest joys of the life to come. Communion with God is the most exalted spiritual

privilege, and the habit of communion is the proof of the most matured spiritual excellence.

Jesus Christ possessed this privilege in a higher degree than it was ever possessed by man, and He exhibited this excellence in a maturity which was never beheld on earth before or since. On reading His life, the impression is irresistible, that His soul was full of God. The selection of a few great occasions could not convey to us an adequate conception of the constancy and closeness of His union with the Invisible Father. His labours were incessant; He was in the midst of the ignorant, who needed to be instructed, the suffering, who needed to be relieved, and the mourners, who needed to be comforted. The demands made on His sympathy, His wisdom, and His power, were perpetual, and He delighted to meet them all. It was not often that He could rob His public work of the hours which might have contributed to His solitary personal joy, but He was never separated from God in thought or in heart. The word oftenest on His lips was this, "the Father,"—"the Father,"—"God!" Spontaneously, naturally, constantly, the idea rose, because it was a fixed reality, the greatest of all realities in His mind. No being was so present to Him as God; not merely in the hours of peculiar and prolonged communion, but always and everywhere God was everything to Him.

Habitually He brought the Invisible and Uncreated into the sphere of the visible and the created; in His mind the two were one. Even amidst multitudes, who had no sympathy with the movements of His inner nature, He knew how to be alone with God, and could convert the crowded city into a religious solitude.

But the deep yearnings of Jesus' soul, the Divine force within, often drove Him into literal solitude, that He might give unrestrained and full expression to His spiritual emotions. In every one of the eventful crises of His life, He gave affecting testimony to the reality of His oneness with God. "He went into a desert place and there prayed." "He went up into a mountain to pray." We find that He spent days and nights in solitary prayer and communion with God. After His baptism, and before entering on His public course, He went into the wilderness and spent weeks alone with God. On one occasion, after a succession of public labours, we are told that "rising up a great while before day, He departed into a solitary place, and there prayed." When the people sought to take Him by force, in order to crown Him, He withdrew to pray. On the night of His betrayal, thinking more of the sorrows of His disciples than of His own, "He lifted up His eyes to heaven and prayed" for them. In the garden of Gethsemane, over-

whelmed with agony, He prayed, saying, "Father, if it be possible, let this cup pass from me." His agony deepening, "He prayed more earnestly, and His sweat was as it were great drops of blood falling down to the ground." * But that oneness with God, of whose depth many such testimonies were given, was not occasional, but habitual. It was not cherished from a sense of duty, it governed Him irresistibly as an original law of His being. The spontaneous tendencies of His nature, and not the mere conviction of duty, or the force of outward circumstances, drew Jesus to God.

Christ's attendance in the temple or the synagogue, His sacrifices and offerings, and His regard to places, rites, and days—things which in that age were thought to enter into the very essence of religion—are little noticed in the Gospels. But in the habits of His mind, in His words, and in His uniform example, He revealed that which alone gave worth to outward services and sanctity to the synagogue and the temple. He revealed the soul and God, and the reality of intercourse between them. Standing erect in His heavenward tendencies and in His purity, He laid open the spiritual world, its occupations, its eternity, its glory,—like a majestic column, round

* See Matt. xiv. 23, and xxvi. 36; Mark i. 35, and vi. 46; Luke v. 16, vi. 12, and ix. 28; John xvii. 1.

whose base there lies an atmosphere of pollution and darkness, but on whose summit there streams perpetual sunshine. Jesus walked on the earth, but His soul was in the skies with God, and in the light of that upper sphere He ever viewed the world below, and conducted all His ministrations among men.

PART II.

THE FORMS OF CHRIST'S CONSCIOUSNESS.

NATURE OF CONSCIOUSNESS—ITS UNIVERSALITY—VALUE OF ITS TESTIMONY — CHRIST'S CONSCIOUSNESS — HIGHEST DEVELOPMENT—EXPRESSED TO THE LAST — INTERPRETATION — PROOF OF THE VALIDITY OF HIS CLAIMS.

THERE is an inward sense, the counterpart of the senses of the body. These reveal the external, this the internal world. The eye and the ear assure us respecting the existence of material objects; consciousness assures us respecting the actual facts within our minds, our experiences, motives, thoughts, and aims at every moment. In this, all mental phenomena are realized; as by these, all material phenomena are perceived. Consciousness belongs to men universally; it is one of the acknowledged attributes of the human soul, and not the least wonderful. Every human being is distinctly conscious of what is passing in his mind at any moment of the evil and the good in him, his insincerity or sincerity. It is one of the mysteries which are, nevertheless, undoubted facts of our spiritual con-

stitution. In spite of what may be thought by others, whether unfavourable or favourable; in spite of what a man himself may assert and cause to be believed respecting him; in spite of what he wishes to believe, and even sometimes persuades himself he does believe,—deep under all this there lies a clear sense of what is really within him at the moment, and to a man himself this testimony is irresistible. The evidence of consciousness to the individual mind is to the full as decisive as the evidence of the external senses, in their peculiar sphere. A thousand arguments and a thousand difficulties are of no weight in the face of what we see and hear; and a thousand arguments and a thousand difficulties can in no degree disturb the clear testimony of the inward sense. There is, in fact, nothing which can bear comparison with this power, in directness and in strength. That of which a human soul is distinctly conscious as a present fact within it, is of all things most indubitable, because, otherwise, its original constitution and the Framer of that constitution would be impeached. If either the outward senses or this inward sense could not be trusted in their proper sphere, there could be nothing certainly true in the universe; the very foundations of all certitude and of all confidence would be overturned. The reality of that inner fact of which a human soul

is perfectly conscious, is identified with the existence, the veracity, the sincerity, and the goodness of God.

But the evidence of consciousness is available only in a very limited degree, beyond a man himself. Generally, the inward testimony is anxiously concealed from other men; through mere carelessness it may be misunderstood, or it may be designedly mutilated and falsified. But if a faithful report of it could be obtained; if we were able, by satisfactory evidence, to ascertain beyond doubt that what was said to be a positive consciousness was really such, this testimony would be as convincing and as valid to others as to the man himself, and we should reach a species of proof, than which none can be higher or stronger. The Gospels profess to report in Christ's own words the voice of His soul to Himself, and it is this report which must now be impartially examined; Christ's own statements respecting what He found and felt in His nature.

This Being never uttered a word to man or to God which indicated the sense of a single defect in His whole life. The Old and New Testaments record the lives of many godly and honoured men—Abraham, Moses, Samuel, Elijah, Ezekiel, John, Peter, Paul, and others; but they all confess faults and sins, and repent, and throw themselves on the mercy of God.

Religious biography leaves on the mind an impression of the same character, only more deeply marked. Without exception, the lives of men who feared and loved God, and who in intention and in effect were workers for Him and for their race, exhibit inconsistencies and imperfections. Such men utter humiliating confessions and severe self-reproaches; and we are not surprised that they do; it would create astonishment if they did not. The range of general biography includes the illustrious men of all nations and of all times—men distinguished for their moral qualities, their intellectual powers, their acquirements in all the various branches of knowledge, the positions of influence to which they have risen, and the reputation they have won, and which, perhaps, has lived through a succession of ages. It includes the originators of useful and sagacious schemes, the conductors of movements which have conferred extensive and lasting benefit on the world. It includes all the great benefactors of mankind, the instructors, examples, and guides of their race. Now we assert, without fear of contradiction, that in each individual, within this almost limitless range, there is found much that is wrong in the sight of God and men, many a deficiency, many a weakness, many a false step, many a positive sin. What is equally to our purpose, not one of all this vast number ever

professes to be free from errors and sins, or seeks to be thought so.

But Jesus Christ uniformly expressed a distinct sense of faultlessness and perfection. He never once reproached Himself, or regretted anything He had ever done or said. He never uttered a word to indicate that He had ever taken a wrong step, or neglected a single opportunity, or that anything could have been done or said more or better than He had done and said. Here is a Being who was calmly, perfectly conscious of faultlessness. "I do always those things which please the Father."* "Which of you convinceth me of sin? And if I say the truth, why do you then not believe?"† "The prince of this world cometh, and hath nothing in me."‡

There is a still more mysterious utterance of Christ's inward nature. We find Him avowing the most extraordinary sense, not merely of personal perfection, but of official greatness. "I am not alone, for the Father is with me."§ "I and my Father are One."‖ "My Father worketh hitherto, and I work."¶ "He that sent me is with me; the Father hath not left me alone."** "My meat is to do the will of Him that sent me, and to finish His work."†† We do not

* John viii. 29. † Ib. viii. 46. ‡ Ib. xiv. 30.
§ Ib. xvi. 32. ‖ Ib. x. 30. ¶ Ib. v. 17.
** Ib. viii. 29. †† Ib. iv. 34.

profess to exhibit the full meaning of these holy texts: but it cannot be disputed that they convey this at least, a conviction on the part of Jesus that He was at one with the Father, in some high and merciful enterprise. To His own consciousness it was certain, that He was obeying not His own will only, but the will of the Father; that He was unfolding not His own thoughts only, but the thoughts of the Father, and that He was carrying on not a work of His own merely, but the work of the Father. And on this inward sense of relation to God there was built up a conviction of the strict individuality, the solitary grandeur of His mission. "I am the Bread of life."* "I am the Light of the world."† "I am the Way, the Truth, and the Life."‡ "I am the good Shepherd, and know my sheep, and am known of mine; and my sheep hear my voice, and they follow me, but a stranger will they not follow."§ "I am come that they might have life, and that they might have it more abundantly."‖ "All things are delivered to me of my Father, and no man knoweth the Father save the Son, and he to whomsoever the Son shall reveal Him."¶ "Your father Abraham rejoiced to see my day, and he saw it and was glad."** "Many prophets and kings have desired to see those things

* John vi. 35. † Ib. viii. 12. ‡ Ib. xiv. 6. § Ib. x. 14, 4, 5.
‖ John x. 10. ¶ Matt. xii. 27. ** John viii. 56.

which ye see, and have not seen them, and to hear those things which ye hear, and have not heard them."* "The queen of the south shall rise up in judgment with the men of this generation, and shall condemn them; for she came from the uttermost parts of the earth to hear the wisdom of Solomon, and behold a greater than Solomon is here. The men of Nineveh shall rise up in judgment with this generation, and shall condemn it, for they repented at the preaching of Jonas, and behold a greater than Jonas is here."†

But more mysterious, more awful still, were the words in which Jesus sometimes pronounced Himself. On several separate occasions He employed, in the hearing of men, language which human lips could not have uttered without impiety. "Thy sins be forgiven thee." "The Son of Man hath power on earth to forgive sins."‡ "The hour is coming when the dead shall hear the voice of the Son of God, and they that hear shall live."§ "When the Son of Man shall come in His glory, and all the holy angels with Him, then shall He sit on the throne of His glory, and before Him shall be gathered all nations."‖ The deep sense of His mysterious greatness, which these passages indicate, was expressed by Jesus from the first,

* Luke x. 24. † Ib. xi. 31, 32. ‡ Matt. ix. 2, 6.
§ John v. 25. ‖ Matt. xxv. 32.

and it was never lost or even impaired. At the last, when darkness gathered round Him, He shrunk not from the avowal. Immediately before His crucifixion, He said to the judge who condemned Him, "Thou couldst have had no power at all against me, except it were given thee from above."* "To this end was I born, and for this cause came I into the world, that I should bear witness unto the truth. My kingdom is not of this world: if my kingdom were of this world, then would my servants fight, that I should not be delivered to the Jews: but now is my kingdom not from hence."† From first to last, in His humiliation and in His sufferings, and at His dying hour, just as in the outset of His career and the freshness of His public fame, this was the same great and dread Being.

The frequent utterance of a mysterious and distinctive consciousness, on the part of Jesus, cannot be disputed. To say nothing of the inspiration of the New Testament; unless it be utterly fabulous and false, if even in the most loose sense it be authentic, this is certain, that Jesus often expressed without reserve a sense of personal faultlessness and perfection; and what is more, a sense of the incomparable dignity and sacredness of His official position.

* John xix. 11.

† Ib. xviii. 36, 37. See Channing's Sermon, p. 428.

In His own conception, He stood between man and God, in a crisis of the world's history which had no parallel. He was alone in the ages, bearing a burden for which no former age was ripe, and by which no subsequent age was to be oppressed. He was doing a work in which He could have no partner; He was alone in responsibility, in power, and in rank!

Such, supposing the Christian record to be of the smallest historical value, is the indubitable fact. Can it be accounted for—can any important conclusions be founded upon it—what does it really involve?

1. Perhaps some of Christ's injudicious and over-zealous followers suggested to His mind the pretensions which He avowed. This is not conceivable; for the consciousness which He expressed comprehended far more than any of them believed, or even understood at the time, much as they honoured and loved Him.

2. Perhaps the language of Christ originated in mere vanity and conceit. It must have been consummate, unparalleled vanity, if it was vanity at all; but this is plainly incompatible with the sobriety and solidity of His deportment. Besides, the idea expressed was too lofty to have had such a despicable origin; it was too spiritual, and too closely connected with God, with religion, with the unseen world;

unless, indeed, He had been utterly reckless and profane.

3. Perhaps it originated in a deep-laid scheme of ambition. The prompt answer to this suggestion is that such was not Christ's character at all. He was no crafty and designing hierophant or demagogue. His own declaration was simply true, and was verified by His entire course, "My meat is to do the will of Him that sent me, and to finish His work." Interested motives, in any form, never once indicated their presence in Him, by a single token during His whole life.

4. Perhaps it originated in enthusiasm.* But only an enthusiasm amounting to raving insanity could have uttered itself in such language as His. If its origin was enthusiasm at all, it must have been the very insanity of enthusiasm, and His grave and meek life decisively forbids this supposition. There was nothing, either in His sayings or His doings, incoherent, contradictory, wild. Both manifested entire self-possession and the calmest wisdom.

5. Perhaps it originated in mere mistake. With all His excellence, intellectual and moral, was not Jesus Christ nevertheless singularly mistaken on one point? Perhaps He fancied Himself greater and better than He really was. Without the slightest

* Channing, p. 427.

intention to deceive, with entire sincerity and honesty, He uttered what He thought was the voice of His consciousness; but it was a mere fancy, a serious, but not altogether unlikely, mistake. We may well ask in reply, Was Jesus Christ also mistaken, when He uttered in the ears of men lessons which the wisest and best souls, ever sent into this world before, had never imagined? Was He mistaken, when He bestowed on mankind a body of living spiritual truths, which all previous systems, taken together, do not approach, and to which nothing worthy to be named has ever been added? In such a matter as this, was He mistaken, who had revealed the deepest secrets of the nature of God, of the human soul, and of the future state? Was He unable to report faithfully a thing so near at hand as the voice of His own consciousness; and in the stead of that voice, did He publish a groundless conceit to the world? These things do not comport; it is impossible that they should be both true of the same individual. The ground neither of injudicious foreign influence, nor of vanity, nor of deep-laid ambition, nor of enthusiasm, nor of honest mistake, can be taken in this case. The wickedness, or weakness, or both, which these suppositions would involve, are utterly irreconcilable with the acknowledged character of Jesus. None of the principles which

are found to account for extravagant claims in the case of other historical personages, nor all of these principles together, are adequate or applicable in His case. But, whether unexplained or explained, the fact remains, that Jesus repeatedly expressed a sense of personal perfection and of extraordinary relation to God. He found and felt this, as a fact of His inward nature; He uttered it, as a distinct consciousness. A conviction is founded on evidence, and is reached by a process of reasoning. The foundation may be unsound, the reasoning may be false, and the conviction may be an error; but a consciousness is an immediate and involuntary act, like seeing by the eye, or hearing by the ear. It is its own evidence, and none can be more satisfying, more sure. By the very constitution of the soul, this is the highest proof possible of the reality of that which it presents.

We can come only to one conclusion, that the words of Jesus were the faithful and genuine expression of a consciousness which creates an impassable distinction between Him and all men. In that true voice of His soul, there is the strongest evidence of indubitable reality. He spoke what He felt, and He felt what He truly was. His nature was conscious of the profound mystery which belonged to it, and He simply uttered this consciousness; and no apparent

inconsistency between what He claimed and what He seemed to be, troubled Him for a moment.

A young man who had not long left the carpenter's workshop, who at the moment He spoke was in a condition of poverty, and was associated only with those who were obscure and poor like Himself, calmly declared His sense of perfect faultlessness and of extraordinary relation to God. Is it possible, that any candid mind can reflect on the plain facts of this history, and on the principles which lie beneath them, on the seeming of this marvellous life, and on the reality which the seeming does but veil—ay, often unveil—and not be filled involuntarily with wonder and with awe?

PART III.

THE TOTALITY OF HIS MANIFESTATION BEFORE THE WORLD.

TRUE MAN—PECULIAR SUSCEPTIBILITY—SUFFERINGS AND PROVOCATIONS—UNCONQUERABLE PATIENCE—SPIRITUAL PERFECTION—SIMPLICITY AND FRESHNESS—UNIFORM EXCELLENCE—JESUS A MANIFESTATION, NOT AN EFFORT—A PURE ORIGINAL, NOT AN IMITATION—ALONE IN HISTORY.

CHRIST'S original and constant oneness with God prepares us to expect in Him an extraordinary elevation and purity of character. His mysterious consciousness, also, is the proof of moral greatness which never belonged to man. But in addition to these, there is another proof of His spiritual individuality, which comes home more directly to the consciences and hearts of men, and is fitted to move them more powerfully. It is found in His life, as a whole, in the entire unfolding of His character before the world from first to last.

His complete identification with universal humanity cannot fail to be recognised at once. He belonged to no privileged class, and, as an inhabitant of the world,

He enjoyed no protection or advantage of any kind which was not common to all other human beings, Real moral excellence and holy force of character are admirable, whatever may have been the history of their production, but they are certainly less impressive when peculiar advantages have been enjoyed for their cultivation, and when peculiar measures have been adopted for their acquisition. If a man withdraw himself from the duties, trials, and snares of the world, retire to solitude, and devote his life to the pursuit of virtue, it is felt, however elevated his character may become, that the methods to which he has resorted are impossible to men in general, and indeed are at variance with the constitution of things which God has ordained. Even the example of an individual in the higher walks of society, or belonging to some privileged order, or in any other way placed in circumstances more than usually favourable to mental and spiritual development, protected against hindrances and evils which beset other men, and possessed of encouragements and helps which they cannot reach, can never act effectively and permanently on the world.

But Jesus Christ was man in the wide sense of that term, and was placed altogether in the ordinary circumstances which attend the general lot of humanity on earth. He belonged to the masses and was brought

up with them, unprivileged and undistinguished. His associations, His outward relationships, His speech and His dress, were of the same kind with theirs, and there was every natural ground of sympathy between them and Him. We read of His weariness, hunger, and thirst; of His tears and His groans; of His friendship with His disciples, and with John in particular—with Lazarus, Martha, and Mary: we read of Him weeping at the grave of His friend: we read of His love to little children, and taking them in His arms and blessing them. Whatever else He was, He was a man, a true man, and His was a true and warm human heart. No reader of His life can doubt that He shared to the full in the common circumstances, occupations, susceptibilities, trials, and wants of universal humanity.

Thus conditioned, Jesus had to encounter a difficulty of overwhelming force, peculiar to Himself and arising out of the constitution of His soul. In His own idea, whether true or false it matters not, He was born to a God-like work. A mysterious purpose lay in His mind; it was to redeem and reclaim a world, to recover man to God and to immortal perfection. This was the passion of His heart; and the very nature of this passion, this purpose, would necessarily render Him more keenly susceptible and more dependent on grateful appreciation. But He

was unappreciated and unsupported. Even His disciples, instead of fortifying Him by their enlightened sympathy, vexed Him with their low and earthly thoughts, and, without intending or even knowing it, they often obstructed instead of helping Him. This was not all. He encountered designed resistance and unrelenting and cruel persecution. He never injured a single being: in His heart lay only intense love, but it was basely requited. His actions were decried, His motives suspected, His character maligned, and His spirit, too unselfish and pure for that age, was misconstrued and misunderstood. Because He was holy and denounced all evil, the workers of evil conspired against Him, and moved an entire people in their wickedness and blindness to put Him to death. The forms of justice were violated, the name of religion was prostituted, and He was surrendered to the unrestrained revenge and power of His enemies. But even then, He was absolutely unmoved in the deep love of His heart, and in all His gracious thoughts of man and for man's salvation. Never, amidst cruel provocation and persecution, was His soul excited to anger. Once in the narrative of His life, the word anger is connected with His name—"He looked round upon them with anger, being grieved for the hardness of their hearts." But the passage itself sufficiently proves that it is not anger

which is meant, but strong emotion, indignation perhaps, or amazement; for the same persons could not possibly be the objects of grief and of human anger at the same time. Of one being in human form, but of one only, it can be said, that He never spoke an angry or unkind word, and never indulged for a moment an angry or unkind feeling. Ingratitude, injustice, hatred, pierced His soul; but His forgivingness, patience, meekness, and measureless love, were never disturbed. He bore in silence "the contradiction of sinners against Himself;" "He was obedient unto death, even the death of the cross;" "when He was reviled He reviled not again, when He suffered He threatened not, but committed Himself to Him that judgeth righteously." "Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do," was the prayer with which He died, and it breathes the spirit which pervaded His whole life.*

Was ever man like this? Was such a manifestation of a human soul ever even imagined? Certainly never, except in this instance, was such a manifestation described.

* The Rev. T. H. Horne, in his "Introduction to the Study of the Scriptures," vol. i. p. 422, puts into English a magnificent eulogy of the character of Jesus, by J. J. Rousseau. The piece, in itself, is surpassingly beautiful and eloquent; but considering who its author was, it is beyond measure astonishing. The original passage will be found in the "Émile, ou de l'Éducation," liv. 4. Œuvres, tome ii. pp. 91, 92. Frankfort, 1762.

Greatness, in the sense which most commends itself to many minds, cannot be claimed for Jesus. His name is not associated with the philosophy, the literature, or the science of the world. He occupied a position far above them. The good sense and the good taste of candid men will pronounce unhesitatingly, that formal connexion with any or all of them would have degraded, and not exalted Him. It is not that they are not unspeakably important to the world, and it is not that He, or the religion which He founded, in its principles or its spirit, was hostile to them. But He was personally apart from them, and His greatness belonged to quite another sphere — one infinitely higher. We have shown that transcendent opulence, and power, and grandeur of soul were His; we have shown that He dealt as a master with things which the greatest of men thought it their highest office, even distantly, to approach. Unknown to philosophy, literature, and science, in Him shone a light which they never kindled, and in Him were the universal principles of all beauty and all truth.

The difficulty which we chiefly feel in dealing with the character of Christ, as it unfolded itself before men, arises from its absolute perfection. On this very account, it is the less fitted to arrest observation. A single excellence unusually developed, though in

the neighbourhood of great faults, is instantly and universally attractive. Perfect symmetry, on the other hand, does not startle, and is hidden from common and casual observers. But it is this which belongs emphatically to the Christ of the Gospels; and we distinguish in Him at each moment that precise manifestation which is most natural and most right. It is wonderful, that the unpretending and brief annals of His life, by four different hands, have not failed in this respect, have not failed in any part of the delineation, or in a single touch or tint: so much the more wonderful it is because the character was utterly unlike what the writers could have imagined by the aid either of experience or of history.

In human beings, there never is an approach to sustained, proportioned, and universal goodness. The manifestation in one direction is so high as to be unnatural, while, in another direction, it falls perhaps below the standard of our conceptions. This wondrous Person always is, and acts up to the idea of perfect humanity,—never unnaturally elevated so as to be out of fellowship with men, and never below the highest human excellence, conceivable in the particular circumstances at the time. If men possess a virtue in an unusual degree, the probability is, that they will be found to exhibit a defect or fault in the

opposite direction. The virtue itself shall pass into a fault, and shall occasion the injury or the neglect of other qualities equally essential. A man is remarkable for sagacity and decision, but he shall be coldly unsusceptible; or he is tender and ardent, but he shall be wanting in resolution and in judgment. He is remarkable for dignity of deportment, but he shall be reserved and proud; or he is communicative and accessible, but he shall be wanting in becoming self-respect. The high development of the intellect is rarely combined with the due cultivation of the affections, and the cultivation of the affections is rarely combined with full development and force of intellect. Jesus Christ possessed the tenderest heart overflowing with generous and warm feelings, but, at the same time, His wisdom was profound, and His decision of character was invincible. He was accessible to all without exception, and no circle of exclusiveness was at any time drawn around Him in order to guard His presence, but He was always self-possessed and self-sustained, and His dignity was commanding. Intellectually and morally, socially and personally, in relation to His kindred or His disciples, to the followers or the enemies of His ministry, He always rises up to the highest idea that can be found of perfect man. And then, there is thrown over all His intercourse with men, the charm of freshness and

genuine simplicity. Nothing is artificial, nothing assumed, nothing forced; we behold only the natural, honest, free development of a true soul. He is never trying to impress, never labouring to sustain a character. He is not aiming to seem, but He seems what He really is,—no more, no less, no other. Nor does this Being come before us only on a few special occasions, carefully selected, in order to exhibit conspicuously the best aspects of His character. We behold Him in every conceivable variety of positions, mingling with all sorts of persons, and with all kinds of events; we follow the steps of His public life, and we watch His most unsuspecting and retiring moments; we see Him in the midst of thousands, or with His disciples, or with a single individual; we see Him in the capital of His country, or in one of its remote villages, in the temple and the synagogue, or in the desert, or in the streets; we see Him with the rich and with the poor, the prosperous and the afflicted, the good and the bad, with His private friends and with His enemies and murderers; and we behold Him at last in circumstances the most overwhelming which it is possible to conceive, deserted, betrayed, falsely accused, unrighteously condemned, nailed to a cross! But wherever He is and however placed, in the ordinary circumstances of His daily life or at the Last Supper, or in Gethsemane, or in

the judgment-hall, or on Calvary, He is the same meek, pure, wise, God-like Being.

It must be most distinctly noted, that the character of Jesus was a manifestation, not an effort. Men rise to spiritual excellence; but it is from the imperfections and errors of first efforts, it is after repeated failures, and as the result of a long and hard struggle with evil; and whatever triumph be achieved, the struggle, not unattended with frequent defeat, is prolonged to the last. This is the unqualified testimony of individual experience and of universal observation. But, in the case of Jesus Christ, there were no indications of struggle or even of effort, and not a single failure or defeat. His soul was deeply moved by the darkness and the evil around Him; but He was personally untainted with either. We behold the gradual unfolding of an inward power, which did not need to contend, but meekly and at once put aside whatever resistance was offered to it. By the words and the acts of His life, Jesus rebuked all that was ungodly, impure, and false among men; but invariably it was in the manner of one who Himself was guiltless, and who was sent to renovate and bless the world. His life was a triumph from the first—the manifestation of a soul that stood invincible in its native spiritual force.

The character of Jesus, besides, was a pure original, not an imitation. The model existed not, and had never existed, from which it could have been copied. There is no record, in the writings of all nations and of all times, of a life for which absolute perfection is claimed from its beginning to its close. But the character of Christ drawn in the Gospels, though undesignedly on the part of the writers, is human perfection, in which we can discover no defect, and which we can imagine nothing beyond. Nor is it the concentration in a single life of attributes which, though they never all existed in combination before, had all existed separately, in different proportions, in other lives and other times. There are single elements of character and combinations of elements here, which are perfectly new; appreciated and admired, having been once disclosed, but no trace of which had before appeared. The entire personality, as it rose up before the world, was a fresh living original—a stream from its native fountain, not the accumulation of many tributary waters.

The suspicion is very groundless, that that life which is delineated with great artlessness in the Gospels was not real, but ideal—a creation of the writers' own minds, not a simple account of what they had actually witnessed. We need only refer to

the intellectual and moral condition of Judea, with its known principles, habits, and tastes, to the position and character of the Evangelists, and then to the representation itself which they have executed, in order to show convincingly that such a suspicion is the most visionary which can be imagined. That country, that age, and these men could never have even conceived, still less described, the ideal spiritual excellence which they have attached, as a reality, to the Person of Jesus; least of all was it possible, that such excellence could have been connected by them with the name and the office of the promised Messiah. This was not their idea of spiritual excellence at all; especially, it was not their idea of the Messiah. In several most important respects, it was exactly the opposite of their idea; and by no possibility could it have originated merely in their minds. Such a character as that of Jesus, they were not the persons to have ever imagined; and that it has been delineated by them, is the unassailable proof that it was actually seen.

Never passed before the imagination of man, and never but once alighted on this earth, so heavenly a vision. Once, in all human history, we meet a Being who never did an injury and never resented one done to Him, never uttered an untruth, never practised a deception, and never lost an opportunity of doing

good, generous in the midst of the selfish, upright in the midst of the dishonest, pure in the midst of the sensual, and wise far above the wisest of earth's sages and prophets, loving and gentle, yet immoveably resolute, and whose illimitable meekness and patience never once forsook Him in a vexatious, ungrateful, and cruel world.

If the New Testament had contained only the character of Jesus, as it unfolded itself in His intercourse with men, it had deserved a place above all human productions, it had been a mine of spiritual wealth and a fountain of holy influence unknown to every other region and to all the ages of time.

PART IV.

THE MOTIVE OF HIS LIFE.

ABSENCE OF SELFISHNESS—PRESENCE OF PURE AND LOFTY MOTIVES —HIS ACTIVE GOODNESS—VIEWS OF THE SOUL—LOVE OF MAN AS MAN—HIS LIFE A VOLUNTARY SACRIFICE.

THE recorded life of Christ proves that He neither sought to gain, nor in point of fact did gain, power, wealth, or fame, for Himself or for any connected with Him. He had frequent and fair opportunities of gratifying ambition, had His nature been tainted with that passion. Occasions were even thrust upon Him, and the amplest means were ever ready to His hand. The Jews expected in their Messiah a king and were burning with impatience for his advent. Jesus needed only to have announced Himself, and the country would have hailed Him with enthusiasm, and would have enthroned and crowned Him. As a matter of fact, such was the state of the public mind, that on more than one occasion, the people were about to take Him by force to make Him a king, but He quietly withdrew till the excitement had passed

away. Throughout His public life, though announcing the sublimest truths, and performing the noblest works, He never stepped, or sought to step, out of the humble sphere in which He had been brought up. It has been shown that He was at first, and He continued to the last, a poor man. He does not seem to have ever possessed for Himself to the value of the smallest coin, and, when He died, He had no means of providing for His mother, and could only commend her to the care of one of His disciples.

The entire absence of selfishness, in any form, from the character of Christ cannot be questioned, and not less undoubted was the active presence of pure and lofty motives. His life was not only negatively good, it was filled up with positive and matchless excellence, and was spent directly and wholly in blessing the world. A large portion of it was occupied with teaching; and both in its design and in its native tendency, Christ's teaching was restorative and healing, and itself at once reveals the motive in which it originated—love of man; profound, unselfish love. This reigning spirit was yet more apparent, though not more really present, in another region of His life. He lived not merely to announce spiritual truth, but to relieve and remove physical suffering. The supernatural character of this portion of His work among men we do not urge; but, apart from this, it is quite

certain that much of His life was occupied in healing the sick, and comforting the sorrowing and the poor. The substance of the record, on this head, is condensed in a few beautiful sentences, by Matthew, iv. 23, 24: "And Jesus went about all Galilee, teaching in their synagogues, and preaching the gospel of the kingdom, and healing all manner of sickness and all manner of disease among the people. And His fame went through all Syria: and they brought unto Him all sick people that were taken with divers diseases and torments, and those that were possessed with devils, and those which were lunatic, and those that had palsy; and He healed them." Make what deductions we will, it is perfectly certain, if anything of history remain in the Gospels, that multitudes in that age experienced the effects of Christ's merciful interposition. "He went about doing good." He wiped away many a tear; He made many human hearts glad; and many others connected with them felt the benignant and genial influence of His earthly ministry. He relieved and removed a great amount of physical suffering; He created and planted in the world a great amount of physical happiness. He devoted Himself to the work of blessing man; and in both regions of His life, in His acts and in His words, in the healing spiritual truths which He imparted and in the unnumbered material kindnesses

which He bestowed, we discover one reigning motive, —love of man; deep, enduring, redeeming love.

We are entitled to assert that compassion for humanity held the place of a master-force in the soul of Jesus Christ. The man is worse than blind, who does not perceive the charm of a subduing tenderness streaming fresh from His heart, and shed over His whole public life. It is related that once as He looked upon the multitudes who had assembled to listen to His teaching, "He had compassion on them, because they were as sheep that had no shepherd."* This short sentence descends to the deepest depth of His being, and lays open the spring of all His movements; He had compassion on the multitudes. Spiritual truth was precious to Him; He felt also the burden of a great mission, and He was tenderly alive to all the rights and claims of God. But He pitied and loved the multitude: their spiritual condition, their destinies, their necessities, and their sorrows oppressed His heart. In addition to all the force of fidelity to God, to Himself, and to truth, of which He was conscious, there were impulses of love and pity that gushed up ever warm and fresh in His bosom, and imparted a subduing tone to all His ministrations. Jesus saw an inexpressible worth in human nature. It is fallen and ruined, but it is a

* Matthew xv. 32.

precious ruin. The wonderful powers yet left to the soul and the amazing destiny before it, ineffably bright or unutterably dark, were present to His mind, and were the source of that yearning affection which ruled His life. He loved man as man. The attachment of the members of the same family or of the natives of the same country, of companions in suffering, and of disciples of the same faith, to each other is easily understood. But when the circle is widened the attachment is proportionally impaired, and love to man, simply as man, is scarcely intelligible. To Christ this was not only an intelligible but a profound reality. Neither natural relationship, nor condition, nor even character, nor country, nor creed, determined the movements of His heart. It was man He loved—the nature, the race, for its own sake, and because of its solemn relations to eternity and to God. Himself man, He felt an inexpressible nearness to humanity; and His whole life, and still more His death, were an expression of His immeasurable love. The higher purposes of the Cross are not now before us; but it must not be overlooked that, at last, Jesus could have saved His life if He would have sacrificed His mission. But that mission was dearer to Him than life; man was dearer to Him, man's redemption and restoration to God were dearer to Him, than life. He could not, would not, abandon

these; but His life He could and did surrender, a true and holy sacrifice on the cross!

A single act of pure generosity fails not to touch the human heart; all men bow down instinctively before it. There are some human names which the world can never forget, the names of those who, in different departments, perhaps for a course of years, exhibited wonderful devotion to the good of others. What, then, shall be said of Him whose entire life was spent in benefiting, not a single class, but all classes of men, and in originating, not one form, but endless forms of good, from the lowest up to that which relates to the immortal nature and to its highest destinies? Christianity, and Christianity alone, is the revelation of a pure and a perfect love, the unveiling of the solitary living model of this grace which humanity has furnished. A profound secret of God, the unfathomable mercy of His nature, was to be divulged to the world. It was pronounced in words, in words of deep significance; but it was also expressed by a sign; and there stood before men an impersonation of perfect love, a life which disclosed and embodied intense, inextinguishable, self-sacrificing love.

PART V.

HIS IMMOVEABLE FAITH.

HIS FOREKNOWLEDGE OF HIS DEATH—SOLITARINESS—NEVER HIMSELF DISAPPOINTED—TRUTH, A PROVISION FOR WANTS, CURE FOR EVILS OF THE WORLD—ATTRIBUTES OF GOD—EXPRESSIONS AND PROOFS OF CHRIST'S ASSURANCE—INSTITUTION OF THE SUPPER—INTERPRETATION OF FACTS.

IT is one of the marvellous facts in Christ's history, that He distinctly foreboded the calamities which were to befall Him. Evil did not come upon Him unawares; its pressure and its bitterness were aggravated by anticipation. No explanation is here offered of this fact, and nothing will be built upon it in the way of argument, but it stands with great distinctness in the narrative. "From that time forth began Jesus to show unto His disciples, how that He must go unto Jerusalem and suffer many things of the elders and chief priests and scribes, and be killed, and be raised again the third day."* In harmony with this He forewarned His disciples: "Ye

* Matthew xvi. 21.

shall be hated of all men for my name's sake."* "They shall put you out of the synagogues: yea, the time cometh that whosoever killeth you will think that he doeth God service."† In the garden of Gethsemane, He said to those who were with Him, "Behold, the hour is at hand, and the Son of Man is betrayed into the hands of sinners. Rise, let us be going: behold, he is at hand that doth betray me."‡ When Judas with his band of soldiers drew near, "Jesus, knowing all things that should come upon Him, went forth and said unto them, Whom seek ye? They answered Him, Jesus of Nazareth. Jesus saith unto them, I am He."§ If Christ was gifted, whether naturally or supernaturally, with anything of the insight into the future which these passages suppose, at least no one will doubt, that its effect must have been to render the burden of calamity many times more crushing. But, leaving this debated ground, we must repeat the fact already referred to for a different purpose,—that Christ was literally alone in His sufferings, unsupported by a single human mind. Courage and faith are not unusual, when the principles that call them forth have been adopted by others, and have received this decisive proof of their adaptation and their truth.

* Matthew x. 22.
† John xvi. 2
‡ Matthew xxvi. 45, 46.
§ John xviii. 4, 5.

That which is true, indeed, is not more true by being understood and admitted, and what a man believes is not really more worthy of his belief than before, when it is accepted by others as well as himself. But mind leans on mind, nevertheless, and the enlightened convictions of one impart increased stability and strength to the enlightened convictions of another. What we could not effect or endure alone, we can effect and endure when supported by other kindred souls. Jesus knew no such support as this. He was followed by multitudes, but it was not because they understood and embraced His principles; and hence, when these principles were more fully disclosed, "many went back and walked no more with Him."* Even His own relatives had no intelligent faith in Him, and His chosen disciples gave to Him their affections rather than their judgments. They devotedly loved His personal character, they believed in His greatness, but they did not comprehend it; the new principles struggled in their minds with the old faith, but they never succeeded, while He lived, in completely displacing it. Hence, when He died the disciples at the first spoke as if their hopes were overthrown for ever. The plain fact is, that Jesus at the last disappointed His disciples, disappointed His own relations, disappointed

* John vi. 66.

the masses of the people, disappointed every one except Himself. He was never disappointed, from the first to the last moment of His course. Without a single complete example of success while He lived, amidst constant discouragement and apparent discomfiture, He calmly believed in the omnipotence of spiritual truth and in the divinity of His own mission.

Speedy triumph He could not and He did not anticipate. With that profound and calm wisdom which distinguished Him, He could not fail to know, when He thought of the insidious and mysterious working of sin, and of its almost indestructible force, that it must be long before it could be for ever extirpated. When He saw human nature fallen from God, and darkened and diseased, He could not fail to know that its restoration, purification, education for immortality, and complete cure, must be a slow and protracted process. When He looked upon the vast empire of evil, the growth of thousands of years, its foundations strong and deep, and its ramifications innumerable, He could not fail to know that its entire and final overthrow must be the work of ages. Tremendous conflicts must precede such a triumph as He anticipated; centuries of darkness and struggle must intervene. But He knew at the same time, and was calmly assured of the perfect adaptation of

spiritual truth to the spiritual condition of the world; and He saw in that truth the only but the sure provision for all the wants of men, the only but the infallible remedy for all the evils that preyed upon them.

"The spiritual nature within man, the spiritual world around and over him, the Uncreated Father of all, pardon of sin, ere long to receive all the elucidation and all the evidence of the cross, the regeneration of the soul and its reconciliation to God:"—these were the living, holy truths which Jesus announced; and in these, in their adaptation, their mighty force, and their certain triumph, His confidence was immoveable. But higher even than this He was able to ascend. From spiritual truth He rose to its author and fountain, God. He believed that His mission was of God, that the purpose which He was unfolding and executing was God's, and that the infinite resources of God were pledged to its realization. He looked to that universal providence which includes mind as well as matter, and to all its mighty combinations and agencies; He looked to the ever-flowing and inexhaustible fountain of spiritual influences, and to Him whose knowledge, wisdom, and power are illimitable, and His confidence was untroubled and serene. In His whole life, no indication of doubt, even for a moment, can be dis-

covered. Not a word of hesitation ever escaped His lips. When His last hour was approaching, His voice to His disciples was the voice of calm assurance. "In the world ye shall have tribulation: but be of good cheer; I have overcome the world."* "Ye now have sorrow; but I will see you again, and your heart shall rejoice, and your joy no man taketh from you."† "The world seeth me no more: but ye see me; because I live, ye shall live also. In that day ye shall know that I am in the Father, and you in me, and I in you."‡ "Peace I leave with you, my peace I give unto you: not as the world giveth, give I unto you. Let not your hearts be troubled, neither let them be afraid."§ With respect to the infallible success of His own mission, this was His language, "I, if I be lifted up from the earth, will draw all men unto me."‖ "This gospel of the kingdom shall be preached in all the world, for a witness unto all nations."¶ At the Last Supper, when Judas Iscariot had gone out to confer with the Pharisees and scribes, Jesus said, "Now is the Son of Man glorified, and God is glorified in Him. If God be glorified in Him, God will also glorify Him in Himself, and will straightway glorify Him."** When He

* John xvi. 33. † Ib. xvi. 22. ‡ Ib. xiv. 19, 20.
§ Ib. xiv. 27. ‖ Ib. xii. 32. ¶ Matthew xxiv. 14.
** John xiii. 31, 32.

stood before the council which condemned Him, and when the high priest adjured Him to tell if He were the Christ, He answered, "Hereafter ye shall see the Son of Man sitting on the right hand of power, and coming in the clouds of heaven."* At that awful moment His faith was unconquered, unconquerable.

This, then, is the state of the case, as a mere matter of history:—A young man, destitute of resources, of patronage, and of influence, commits himself to an enterprise which, so long as He lives, is not appreciated or even understood. He is persecuted and scorned, deserted by His friends, betrayed by one of His disciples, falsely accused and condemned to a disgraceful and torturing death. But alone, with death before Him, and without one earthly support, He calmly believes that the enterprise shall triumph, and that He shall reign in the minds and hearts of men!

Can this have been only human? Was there ever a manifestation of mere humanity like to this? Can anything short of the union of Divinity with this humanity account for the acts and states of Christ's mind?

This is not all; the narrative offers additional facts. At the Last Supper, Jesus told His disciples, as they sat around Him, that the time of His death was near

* Mark xiv. 62

at hand. Were His confidence and courage shaken by the prospect? Did no fear disturb Him—fear of the effect which His death might produce on the opinion of the world? Did no feeling of uneasiness rise within Him, as if after all He might fail? At all events, was He not anxious that the ignominious termination of His course might be concealed, after He was gone? No, He was not; but, with perfect composure, He made provision, that not only His death itself, but all its agony and its shame, should never be forgotten while the world lasted. "He took bread and gave it to His disciples, saying, This is my body broken for you; this do in remembrance of me. In like manner He took the cup, saying, This is my blood shed for you: this do in remembrance of me."*

Was ever serenity like this? Can anything more touching, more sublime than this be conceived? Was it ever heard of, before or since, that a person, in the position of a malefactor, took pains to preserve the memory of His disgraceful death? Jesus Christ, about to be crucified as a felon and a slave, commanded and provided that the fact should be remembered to the end of time—did so in the full confidence that He should at last triumph. And the fact has been remembered. This is the mystery, if He be

* Matthew xxvi.; Mark xiv.; Luke xxii.

not all that He claimed to be, more miraculous than anything ever so called, more inexplicable on all natural principles. The fact has been remembered for eighteen hundred years; it is remembered at this day; and it has been and is remembered, not as a form, a time-honoured custom, but minds have been won to Christ—human hearts have been and are inviolably attached to Him.

Christ's assurance of triumph is an historical fact; His actual triumph for nearly two thousand years is no less historically certain: the two combined lead to one conclusion only. It is this,—He was, as He claimed to be, Divine: His religion is Divine, the only religion which contains the indubitable proof, and presents to the world a real incarnation, of Divinity—God in man.

PART VI.

THE ARGUMENT FROM HIS CHARACTER TO HIS DIVINITY.

MORAL ASPECTS AND OUTWARD FACTS OF CHRIST'S HISTORY—A CHARACTER SUCH AS HIS NOT ONCE BEFORE OR SINCE REALIZED—INTERESTS OF TRUTH AND VIRTUE—MORAL CONDITION OF MANKIND CHARGED ON GOD—HUMANITY IN CHRIST PECULIARLY CONDITIONED—IDEA OF INCARNATION, UNIVERSAL—A PRIMITIVE REVELATION—A UNIVERSAL WANT—PROVISION FOR THIS WANT MADE ONCE FOR ALL—HIGHER NATURE, NOT HIGHER OFFICE MERELY—ABSOLUTE DIVINITY—SECURED AIDS AND INFLUENCES INCOMMUNICABLE TO OTHERS.

THE spiritual individuality of Christ, we have found, is striking as it is manifest. Whether we look to His oneness with God, to the marvellous forms of His consciousness, to the totality of His manifestation, to the motive of His life, or to His unconquerable faith, His character, take it all in all, must be confessed to stand alone in the history of the world. But this character, in its unapproachable grandeur, must be viewed in connexion with the outward circumstances of the Being in whom it was realized,—in connexion with a life not only unprivileged, but offering numerous positive hindrances to the origination, the

growth, and, most of all, the perfection of spiritual excellence. In a Jew of Nazareth—a young man —an uneducated mechanic—moral perfection was realized. Can this phenomenon be accounted for? There is here, without doubt, a manifestation of humanity; but the question is, Was this a manifestation of mere humanity, and no more? Can this be interpreted on the common principles which in other cases explain the facts of history, observation, and experience? It is not maintained in any quarter worthy of regard, that ordinary principles of interpretation are sufficient here. But, if not, what are the extraordinary principles that are sufficient in this singular case?

This question is met by the suggestion that Jesus needed and received for the mission with which He was charged, extraordinary protection from God,—protection for His intellect, His conscience, and His heart; and not only protection, but extraordinary Divine influence, in the illumination, invigoration, guidance, and entire culture of His spiritual nature. It is suggested that, by the holy power and under the sheltering care of God, His character was preserved faultless, and rose to the highest excellence of which humanity is capable. Certainly, special powers are demanded for special functions, and it is fitting that unusual honours should attend unusual responsi-

bilities. It is obvious, also, that God has a right to withhold or bestow His own gifts, and to bestow them on whom and in what measure He pleaseth. But the question arises, if Jesus was no more than man, why have there not been other men like Him? why has there not been one man like to Him in the whole course of time? The question is unanswerable, we humbly maintain. If by the spiritual protection and influence of God, Jesus, in His peculiar circumstances,—with His youth, His want of education, His poverty, and all His hindrances and exposures,—reached moral perfection, it is unaccountable that, in far happier combinations of circumstances, such an attainment has never been approached. What God did for one man, God certainly could have done for other men. It is unaccountable that it has never been done, and that not a single individual known to history has risen to the glory of this youthful, untaught, unprivileged Galilean mechanic. The question here, it must be remembered, does not respect merely adaptation to an extraordinary sphere; it does not respect merely official qualifications and endowments; it relates to personal excellence, to moral education and culture, to inward goodness; and it is, therefore, vitally connected with the great cause of virtue and truth in the world. If Jesus was man only, and if, therefore, the invigorating and

quickening influences of God bestowed on Him could have been bestowed on others, it is impossible, without deep injury to the Divine character, without impeaching either the benignity or the purity of God, to account for their being withheld in other cases. All is intelligible and consistent if Jesus was essentially separate from men, separate in the very constitution of His person—a being raised up once in all time for a crisis which never could again arise, and for a work never to be repeated. But if not, if He was man only, we ask in the name of that holiness which is the life of the intelligent universe, and in the name of God with whom the interests of holiness are paramount, how it has come to pass, that of all men He alone has risen to spiritual perfection? What God did for piety and virtue on the earth at one time and in one case, God certainly could have done at other times and in other cases. If Jesus was man only, God could have raised up, in successive ages, many such living examples of sanctified humanity as He was, to correct, instruct, and quicken the world. But He did not; and the guilt of the moral condition of mankind is thus charged at once upon Him; and the real cause of the continuance of moral evil, and of the limited success of holiness and truth in the earth, is thus declared to be in God—that cause is the withholding of His merciful influences.

If such be the inevitable conclusion to which these premises lead, we have no alternative except to abandon them as false and impious. Jesus Christ cannot have been merely man. No mere man, especially under the outward conditions that environed Him,—not the most venerable and gifted sage, in circumstances incomparably more favourable than His,—ever rose to His moral stature; and unless all analogy and the unbroken testimony of all history are to be set aside, we must believe that Jesus was not merely man. It is morally impossible, that the spiritual perfection of His character can have been owing to Divine influences, which could have been bestowed as well on others as on Him. If they could have been bestowed, we cannot doubt, looking to the benignant and holy character of God, that they must have been bestowed. Since they were not bestowed on others, but only on Him, there must have been something in Him, some real and great difference to account for the fact, something which rendered that possible to Him, which was not possible to any other. Between Him and all men there must have been a separation —though there was also as certainly a community—of nature; a separation not incidental and relative only, but constitutional and organic. Humanity in Him must have existed under conditions essentially distinct from those which belong to the universal

humanity of the world. Incarnation, but incarnation alone, helps us to the solution of the overwhelming difficulties of this case. It is perceived at once that this involved access to God and reception from Him, —involved illumination, protection, guidance, and power absolutely and necessarily incommunicable to all others. Man, Jesus certainly was, but not man merely, but God in man.

We cannot hope to discover, in the religions of mankind, the method of solving the deepest problem of Christianity, but it is quite possible that they may illustrate, perhaps confirm, the only satisfactory solution which has yet been suggested. In these religions, almost without exception, the idea of incarnation will be found under one form or another. It is related that Paul and Barnabas, in the city of Lystra, were about to receive Divine honours: Barnabas was to be worshipped as an incarnation of Jupiter, and Paul as an incarnation of Mercury. The people of Lycaonia cried, "The gods have come down to us in the likeness of men." * The noticeable fact is, that this was not a new and strange thought to them, but one apparently familiar and generally received, and which therefore at once occurred to them, as affording an easy interpretation of what they had seen and heard in connexion with the two

* Acts xiv. 11.

foreigners. The numberless metamorphoses of the gods of ancient Greece and Rome, and in the Eastern world the incarnations of Brahm, the avatars of Vishnu, and the human form of Kreeshna, and its reappearance in successive ages, are significant and demonstrative on this subject. Among almost all nations, and from the earliest period of which any authentic record has been preserved, down to our own times, the idea of God incarnating Himself is found. But mankind do not universally and for successive ages adopt that which is wholly false. On the most philosophical grounds it may be argued, that the continued and wide acceptance of the notion of incarnation in the world is decisive proof that it must have some basis of truth. The idea indeed, if admitted by men at all, was manifestly for conscience and reason, in their most reverent and subdued exercise, and not for imagination. It was too awfully sacred for imagination, even in its most chastened movements, to have approached. But imagination, unchastened, irreverent, impure, coarse, and wild, dared to violate this sanctity. The result we behold in the contradictions, absurdities, blasphemies, and offences against all faith and all religious feeling and taste of which the world is full. But, in spite of the humiliating and revolting facts of this kind which abound, it may be argued incontrovertibly, that the

idea itself of incarnation must from its universality have some basis of truth. One of two things, or both, may be legitimately presumed. Either this idea is the traditionary vestige of some primitive revelation, or there must be some grand necessity of universal human nature which, it is felt, can be met only by the doctrine of Incarnation in one form or other. The deep sense of such a necessity, all nations and all times have proclaimed. But Christianity alone reveals the one actual Divine provision which has been made to meet this universal want. It was a promise in the beginning, it was a hope and a faith in successive ages, and in the fulness of the times the promise was fulfilled, the faith and the hope were realized. Once for all, a response worthy of God was given to the cry of humanity; once for all, to meet a grand necessity, to achieve what otherwise could not have been achieved, for the redemption of man, God incarnated Himself. The union of Divinity with humanity is the only principle which harmonizes the outward facts and the moral aspects of the life of Jesus Christ. Disgusted by the absurdities, and shocked by the impurities and impieties of mythological incarnations, conscience and reason find rest in one incarnation for all time.

In the New Testament this awful doctrine stands apart from all the additions which the fancy, or folly,

or corrupt taste of men have in other cases introduced. Here is not a baseless invention, but a thing for which numerous and extraordinary proofs can be advanced. This also, instead of creating perplexity, which had not otherwise existed, relieves and removes perplexity, the existence of which is indubitable, and the removal of which by other means is impossible. What is still more, this is not gratuitous mystery, the only purpose of which is to embellish or hallow a system. It is not a grand and useless dogma, but a necessity, in order to the solution of facts profoundly interesting and all-important,—a necessity, to which both the course of history, and the laws and experiences of the human mind, compel us to bow.

The mystery involved in the idea of incarnation, notwithstanding the considerations which have been advanced, remains as dark as ever. The union of Divinity with humanity in the Person of Jesus Christ we cannot explain, cannot comprehend; but that such union existed, we must believe, because it rests on evidence which cannot be set aside; and some, at least, of the consequences that follow from the mysterious fact are perfectly intelligible to us. It is clear, for example, as we have sought to show, that incarnation is sufficient to create, and alone can create, that amount of difference between Jesus

Christ and all men, which the facts of His history, otherwise irreconcilable, demand for their solution. Humanity in Him existing under conditions which are found nowhere else, we are prepared for moral peculiarities which would otherwise be confounding. His spiritual perfection, inexplicable on every other principle, on this principle is intelligible and consistent.

In the personal character of Christ—His spiritual individuality—we have the evidence not only of a higher office, but of a higher nature than ever belonged to man; the evidence of His essential, constitutional separation from all men.

In Him who was holy, harmless, undefiled, and separate from sinners; in Jesus, the son of Mary, the words of the ancient oracle received their beautiful and final fulfilment: "Unto us a Child is born, unto us a Son is given: and the government shall be upon His shoulder: and His name shall be called Wonderful, Counsellor, The Mighty God, The Everlasting Father, The Prince of Peace." *

* Isaiah ix. 6.

CONCLUSION.

INCARNATION OF JESUS THROWS LIGHT ON ALL THE WONDERS OF HIS HISTORY—SUPERNATURAL BIRTH—RESURRECTION AND ASCENSION—HIS MIRACLES—SPIRITUAL MEANING—TYPICAL CHARACTER — SOPHISTRY OF STRAUSS — EXTRAORDINARY TOKENS OF DIVINITY DEMANDED—THE VOICE OF GOD—WORLD SUMMONED TO LISTEN AND BELIEVE.

THE argument which it was proposed to construct, is completed. We have found, first, that the public ministry of Christ, and, second, that His spiritual character, is incapable of being reconciled, on any natural and known principles, with the outer conditions of His life. In the one case and in the other, and much more when the two are taken together, there is no escape from the conclusion, that the secret of harmony here is altogether preternatural—the union of Divinity with humanity in His sacred Person. And the reasoning, by means of which this conclusion is reached, we have sought to show is based on an ample, a relevant, and an impartial induction of facts.

The doctrine of Incarnation is simply true. It is the darkness, but it is also the glory of the spiritual

history of mankind. It is the central fact in the scheme of moral providence, its unity, harmony, and fountain of power. It is the realization of the highest purposes of God, the unveiling of the depth of His wisdom, love, and might. "Great is the mystery of godliness, God manifest in the flesh."* "The Word was made flesh, and dwelt among us; and we beheld His glory, the glory as of the Only-begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth."† "The Life was manifested, and we have seen it, and bear witness, and show unto you that eternal life, which was with the Father, and was manifested unto us."‡

Having reached this conclusion, a flood of light is reflected back on the Christian records; and many of their announcements, before scarcely credible, become luminous and consistent. These records are separated at once and for ever from all mythologies, whether of Egypt, India, Greece, or Rome. Their foundation is not fable, but fact,—a fact, profoundly mysterious indeed, but incomparably glorious. The combination of mystery and glory at the very basis and on the very threshold of the Gospels, not only prepares the mind for all the peculiarities of their structure, but demands, and even necessitates, discoveries in harmony with this primal characteristic.

If Jesus be the Incarnation of Divinity, it is no

* Tim. iii. 16. † John i. 14. ‡ 1 John i. 2.

longer hard to believe that both His entrance into the world and His departure from it were supernatural. So far from being anomalous, this is altogether necessary and natural. Anything else would not have been in keeping with the history. His virgin mother is a beautiful and simple reality. It would have been incongruous, even offensive, had He not been thus physically separated from all of human kind. His resurrection also, and His ascension to heaven, are transparencies as pure as His miraculous birth. It was most meet that, having lain in the grave and "tasted death for every man," He should rise again and pass into the skies. Thus has He become a glorious prophecy and type of the destiny of all good, which, though struggling hard with evil, and often seemingly overborne, shall ultimately exhibit and assert its indestructible vitality,—a prophecy and type of the destiny of all the good, who, though despised, persecuted, and slain, shall rise again unhurt, emancipated and glorified, to immortal life.

Again, such an entrance into the world, and such a departure from it, could comport only with a life-course full of testimonies and tokens of Divinity. The miracles of Jesus are in strict harmony with the commencement and the close of His career, and, like them, have their ground in the unexampled constitu-

tion of His personality. They are indeed essential to that mysterious existence of His, in which both human and Divine perfection had their place. Without them, the beautiful proportions of a unique biography, the undesigned but very manifest symmetry of a Divine life on earth, would be destroyed. Nor must the character of the miracles of Jesus be overlooked. With Him they were chiefly a method of teaching. Every one of them contained a wide and deep spiritual meaning; and the whole together were an exposition, in a most intelligible and impressive form, of the nature and design of His mission. They were not mere signs of power, but lessons of wisdom and acts of mercy; they were not simply attestations of a Divine Presence, but subduing expressions and expositions of the Divine character. The bountiful and loving God, in the form of man, came to bless the world; the incarnate One—then how truly God-like—is seen giving bread to the poor, sight to the blind, health to the diseased, life to the dead! And how significant, how eloquent, were these material types of His higher spiritual powers and gifts! He was the Bread of Life to the world; He came to do for the soul what He thus did for the body,—came to supply spiritual wants as He had supplied natural wants, to provide a remedy for spiritual evils as He had cured physical evils,—came to abolish death, to

put away sin, and to reveal and bestow eternal life! Literally and spiritually alike, He could apply to Himself the words of the ancient oracle,—"The Spirit of the Lord God is upon me; because the Lord hath anointed me to preach good tidings unto the meek; He hath sent me to bind up the broken-hearted, to proclaim liberty to the captives, and the opening of the prison to them that are bound."*

Strauss, in one of his minor pieces, argues against the value of miracles in some such manner as this (without quoting the express words, we give the spirit of his argument):—"Jesus is said on one occasion to have fed five thousand persons miraculously; but God, every day, supplies the wants of unnumbered myriads. Jesus is said to have given sight to the blind, and even life to the dead; but sensation and vitality are the daily gifts of God to the world in cases past all reckoning. Which is the greater wonder? and what wisdom can there be in placing a lesser miracle before those who will not be moved by the greatest miracle?" We admit the principle, and maintain it against him. His argument is a palpable and a very feeble sophism. The question is not, whether the laws of nature and their constant operation be or be not more truly wonderful than any special departure from them; the question

* Isaiah lxi. 1.

is not, whether there be or be not really more of God in the one than in the other. But the question is this, whether, as a matter of simple fact, men are or are not more impressed by the ordinary operation of natural laws, than by a sudden deviation from it. To this question, all experience, all observation, and all history return a decisive reply. Men who never recognise God in His universal and constant agency within and round them, are immediately arrested and forced to admit the thought that there is a God, even, by a seeming, and still more by a real and startling, deviation from the ordinary course of nature.

We return to the position, that, since Jesus was verily an incarnation of the Godhead, miraculous works in His life were only becoming and natural. This does not in the least exclude the application of the severest criticism to the historical accounts of the Christian miracles. But the unbroken course of nature, in the presence of a fact so stupendous as Incarnation, had been of all things unnatural and incredible. The Divinity within Jesus must have flashed forth through many outlets; and, on the other hand, the world could not but thrill responsively, when it felt the very touch of God. Necessarily, there must have been at such a time extraordinary appearances and movements. It was only reasonable, indeed inevitable, that an age in which the profoundest

mystery of all time was unveiled, and in which Divine religion was to reach its full development, should be distinguished by unwonted signs from heaven. It was only reasonable, indeed inevitable, that such an age should be pre-eminently creative, as of new powers, so of novel and astonishing facts; and that there should be an almighty influence among men, not invisible and mental only, but palpable, and embodied in material forms. Still farther, it is plain that a mystery so inscrutable as Incarnation, and a religion based on this mystery, and claiming to be alone Divine, a religion which professed to rise to the grandest truths of God, and to pierce to the deepest secrets of the human bosom—both needed the fullest confirmation, and merited the glory of supernatural signs. The world, so often deceived by counterfeits of Divinity, was entitled to have the amplest assurance that at last, in very deed, God had descended upon it. In the midst of its corruptions, its false religions, and its darkness, it needed extraordinary means of awakening and sustaining its attention, of arousing its slumbering intellect, and summoning its torpid conscience to life and power. At such a crisis, it was meet, it was indispensable, that the hand of God should be made bare, and that the voice of God should be uttered, as it had never been before.

In nature, its scenery, processes, productions and

very silence, God speaks to His rational offspring, and speaks intelligibly and impressively. In spiritual providence, its operations, ordinary and extraordinary, its history and its laws, God speaks. In man, the products of his intellect, his imagination and his taste, in the achievements of science and art, in the creations of human genius, and in all the utterances of human wisdom and piety, God speaks!

But once, only once, in all time, the Godhead tabernacled in flesh, and from within this marvellous veil gave forth its holy and grand announcements. The first, the lowest, but yet also the last and highest duty of the world, is to listen and believe. The command to all ages and to all men is, "Listen and believe." That command was given of old in Palestine, from the opened sky, beneath which Jesus of Nazareth stood —"This is my beloved Son; hear ye Him."

APPENDIX.

CONTAINING A BRIEF CRITICISM OF THE "VIE DE JÉSUS," BY M. RENAN.

APPENDIX.

BRIEF CRITICISM OF THE "VIE DE JÉSUS."

It will scarcely be deemed unbecoming in me to offer in this place a short examination of M. Renan's "Vie de Jésus," the only work with an opposite aim, professing fully to interpret the biography of the Gospels, which has appeared since "The Christ of History" was first published.

Within the last ten or twelve years, a very decided change has marked the course of thought and of argument adopted by Christian apologists and their opponents. The true Divinity of Jesus is, if possible, more surely believed than ever, and is held with a deeper intensity and fervour. But the noticeable fact is, that His humanity has been far more closely and patiently studied; and His character and His life, as a true man among men, His human thoughts, His human sympathies and affections, His principles and His virtues, are better understood and more tenderly and profoundly appreciated. The conviction has taken hold of many, once hostile,

minds, and promises to deepen and extend itself the more candidly its grounds are investigated, that never before or since has such a being as Jesus Christ appeared in the world. Looked at merely as a true and veritable man, He is seen to stand perfectly alone and unapproachable, in all the ages. Hence the conclusion, that there must be in His nature some stupendous distinction, sufficient to account for His solitary grandeur; an essential, constitutional distinction, separating Him, by an impassable line, from all other men. A unique, a wholly unexampled humanity, as His was, is inexplicable, except on the very highest and holiest grounds, the ground of indwelling Divinity, the ground of a mysterious but real union with Divinity, never realized, save in this sole instance.

But this conclusion does not command universal acceptance. The late Dr. Channing, sincere and upright as he unquestionably was, is a remarkable example of one who deeply admired and honoured and loved Jesus of Nazareth, but who yet was unable to see in Him more than a mere man. We, who have found the promised Emmanuel—God in Christ reconciling the world to Himself—the foundation of the hopes of men and the glory of all the ages, must lament profoundly what we deem a perilous mistake. But it is not for us to judge. For our own sakes, not less than for the sake of others, we must never

forget that error, conscientious, honest error, is not sin, is immeasurably far separated from sin. It should be thankfully remembered besides, that few writers in this century have done more than Channing, or so much as he, to exalt and hallow and endear the character of Jesus; ay, and to supply affecting, and, as we deem, unanswerable evidence against himself.

M. Renan, in the entire tone and spirit of his investigation, stands at the opposite pole from the American theologian. His want of reverence, his free, almost reckless, and by no means scrupulous treatment of the character of Jesus, of the facts of His life and of His motives and aims, could scarcely fail to pain and provoke Christian men. The very citadel of the faith seemed to be rudely assaulted, the holiest and tenderest associations to be cruelly violated, and the one hope of the world to be abandoned, almost disdained. Not fear only, but strong indignation was aroused, and a multitude of vigorous champions rushed forward to do battle, and with all the force of argument and all the warmth of passion to denounce and exterminate this new adversary. The list, rarely equalled in number, of reviews, replies, pamphlets, &c. &c. French, German, and English, by Roman Catholics and Protestants, Churchmen and Dissenters, which this comparatively small work called into being, is formidable even to glance over.

But there is a grave question, which demands to be answered apart from the distractions of party or passion, and only after a calm appeal to justice and truth. Are we justified in counting as an enemy and in treating as an enemy, the man whose judgment respecting historical facts differs—however widely—from ours? If he professes to put forth his honest convictions, are we not bound to accept them as such, without reserve? His information may be inaccurate, and his reasonings may be unsound, but this cannot entitle us to question and to act towards him as if we questioned his conscientiousness and uprightness. He may be manifestly one-sided, and few will question that M. Renan has laid himself open to this charge. But one-sidedness is never confined to any single party in a controversy; invariably it is common to both parties, and often in not unequal proportions. One-sidedness is inevitable in every party and in every human being, and is usually greatest where it is most vehemently disavowed. Nor should it be overlooked that a controversialist, conscious to himself of entire uprightness, is only provoked, never convinced, by insinuations which he knows to be as false as they are injurious. Punished for the honest utterance of his convictions, these convictions become a thousandfold more dear, and just in consequence of the unrighteous treatment to which they have subjected him.

In this place, M. Renan's book is accepted, in all sincerity, as the deliberate expression of his conscientious judgment respecting great historical facts and the greatest historical personage. The "Vie de Jésus" and "The Christ of History," if for a moment the two may be named together, are both professedly constructed on precisely the same basis, the basis of facts acknowledged by both to be authentic. "The Christ of History" represents the existence, the character and the life of Jesus, together with the results of His teaching and of His spirit, as a problem which demands solution, and which must be capable of solution on one principle or another. These, having been once realized in actual fact, realizing themselves still, on a vast scale, at this hour, must admit of being reconciled and harmonized in reason. The question is, what is the true principle of reconciliation? how shall they be satisfactorily interpreted and accounted for? M. Renan professes, by a method of his own, to interpret and account for them. It is well, only well. This new attempt, by a distinguished and zealous man, to explain Christ and Christianity is welcomed, though not without some reserve. Let historical research and high scholarship, and philosophical acuteness and speculative ingenuity, do their utmost. It is right and only fair they should. If the great problem can be thus solved, let it be thus

solved. The more of such attempts the better. Hitherto they have all signally failed. In the foregoing treatise I have sought to prove that they must and cannot but always fail. But their failure may teach the world and bring it at last to the profound conviction that no mere common human principles can ever account for Jesus Christ, and that He, who was truly man, was also more than man, the One only Divine man who ever trod this earth.

M. Renan regards Jesus as a man, a mere man, and no more, in no way essentially different from other men. On this ground, and on this ground alone, he seeks to explain His life and all the consequences which have resulted from it, precisely as one might interpret the life of Alexander the Great, or of Plato, or of Cæsar, or of any other historical personage. Be it so. "The Christ of History" asks no more than this, but finds even in this a basis amply sufficient on which to rest a conclusion diametrically opposite. The concession, for the time, though only for the time, is also made to forego the Divine inspiration of the Gospels, and to presuppose with M. Renan no more than their general historical validity, placing them on the same level with other equally ancient writings. In common, besides, with M. Renan, but on very opposite grounds, "The Christ of History" surrenders whatever support might be derived from the recorded

miracles of Christ.* For, if without this support it can be made out to the satisfaction of intelligent and candid men that Jesus must have been truly Divine, a light is then reflected back from His Divinity, in which miracles are at once transformed and sanctified, and become only the natural and inevitable concomitants of His earthly course. But, in the first instance, it is agreed to put aside, for the time, all that is miraculous and supernatural. Thus far I am at one with the French critic.

The Gospels are before us. We acknowledge their general authenticity and credibility. How shall they be treated? How must they be treated, if they be in any sense authentic? There are two short sentences in his Introduction, in which M. Renan expresses very distinctly his conception of the mode in which the evangelical records are to be dealt with: "Dans les histoires du genre de celle-ci, le grand signe qu'on tient le vrai est d'avoir réussi à combiner les textes d'une façon qui constitue un récit logique, vraisemblable, où rien ne détonne."† "Dans un tel effort

* See an extended and effective defence of the miracles of the New Testament, in a Review of M. Renan by the Rev. J. B. Paton, M.A. pp. 40—70. London, 1864.

† "In histories of this nature, the great proof that we are right is that we have succeeded in so combining the texts, that they form a logical and probable account, without any discrepancy."—*Vie de Jésus*, p. 55. Paris, 1864.

pour faire revivre les hautes âmes du passé, une part de divination et de conjecture doit être permise."*

There lies in these words a fundamental, a fatal mistake. Admitting unqualifiedly the writer's perfect honesty and sincerity, his avowed principle is unsound; the principle from which he sets out and on which he constructs his history is thoroughly unsound, and must fatally vitiate the entire erection which is based upon it. It is not that he does not find "texts," which give a fair colour to what he pictures, but on principle, throughout, he uses not rational induction alone, not induction from the whole of the facts, but also "divination and conjecture" apart from the facts, sometimes in the face of the facts. The divining wand is in his hand, and he feels himself at liberty to call into being what has no place in the record, and to disregard and dismiss solid substantial statements. His eye is unconsciously strained to conjecture how this or that might be, or how perhaps it never was at all. He guesses at what he deems probable truth and probable fact; now almost credulous, and again stolidly sceptical. Honestly desiring to make out of Jesus a veritable, historical, human person, but no more, his eye, without his knowing it, is open only to one side of the

* "Vie de Jésus," p. 55. Paris, 1867. "In such an effort, in order to bring to life again the lofty souls of former ages, a certain amount of divination and of conjecture must be allowed."

extraordinary life and to one class of the unexampled phenomena. It is not that he does not appeal to facts, for he does. But instead of taking in the whole of the facts, he selects some, ignoring others; he even transposes the facts, and sometimes creates and imagines what shall fill up a blank or shall displace and cover over actual phenomena. And thus, in perfect consistency with his underlying idea and in entire singleness of purpose, he makes out of the Gospels, or rather creates, a possible character, a character in some respects unique and great; but it is his creation, the work of his judgment, his fancy, and his taste. It is not the product of the whole facts as they lie in the Gospels but only of a selected portion of the facts. It is not the cautious and well-weighed result of a complete and impartial induction.

Presently reference will be made to one or two distinct proofs, that the error here alleged attaches throughout to the "Vie de Jésus," and vitiates its conception and its structure. But a full and exhaustive verification, which alone could prove entirely satisfactory, would require a volume, not a few pages such as these. Meanwhile very special attention is directed to this point, because I venture to judge that it is through this in great part, and in the first instance, that a conclusive and satisfactory reply can be reached. Let the unprejudiced inquirer, for

himself, verify or falsify, by a thorough examination, what has been alleged. But, first of all, be it borne in mind that it must not be charged against M. Renan that he starts with a preconceived idea. What reader of the Gospels does not? We all do. Nor is it of force to suggest that his preconceived idea influences his investigation. Unquestionably it does and it must, in his case, in our case, in every case. The utmost that is possible to any man is a conscious desire to be impartial and honest, and this, there is no right and no reason to deny in the present instance. Far otherwise.

But the avowed principle of "divination and conjecture"—independently of a fair and exhaustive induction of the authentic facts, above all in the face of such induction, is wholly another matter, and with that we have distinctly to do. And every inquirer, for himself, has to judge to what extent this principle is carried out and in what manner it is applied, and has to satisfy himself how much in the book is due to unquestioned facts, and how much to mere supposition or to arbitrary combination. It is not too much to assert that, were we at liberty to use even a moderate amount of divination and conjecture, apart from a fair induction of all the facts as they lie in the record, and were we to group together, not the whole of the facts, but such only as we thought fit to select,

and especially without careful regard to the order of time and place, it would be possible to bring forth from the evangelical records, not one distinctive character only, but any number of distinctive characters, each widely different from all the others. Nor only this, but on the same principle, or rather want of principle, it would not be hard to accomplish a similar feat with almost any history or biography that was ever written. We come to this: if, leaving out, as is done by consent for the time, all that is supernatural and miraculous, the Gospels be in any available sense historical, then we are bound to take the whole of the facts as they lie before us. It is the facts, in their totality, that alone constitute the life, so far as we have the means of knowing it at all. We may misinterpret them, we may fail to comprehend their individual or their relative force, but we have no right either to select or to transpose, either to group together arbitrarily or to divine what is not clearly conveyed, or to conjecture either omissions or additions. In any other case, this certainly would be, and in this case, perhaps more than in any other, it must be pronounced a lawless and most perilous method of dealing with history, in any sense authentic.

Meantime, it is readily granted that there is a certain sensibility or susceptibility of soul, indispensable, in all cases, to a just perception and appre-

ciation of historical facts, and still more of historical character and life. Universally, there must be some affinity, even congeniality, in that which is within us with that which is without us, before any true relation between the two can exist or be recognised. A traveller, lighting upon a vast stretch of natural scenery shall pause for a while and gaze around him in silent wonder. His eye shall trace out the silver windings of a beautiful river, or shall be raised to the summit of a towering mountain, or shall rest on the flock of sheep peacefully dotting the valley below. He can understand these, he can feel these, he has an eye and a heart for these. But the scene as a whole may fail to touch him strongly and to awaken a true response within. Some of the details he cannot take up and cannot combine into harmony. They are an offence to his eye. He would blot them out if he could, and would displace them with objects more akin to his judgment and his taste. But a truer eye and a more susceptible soul could not afford to lose a single object, a single hue or a single blade, in the scene. The real lover of nature is in unison with the great spirit of nature, be her mood or her form what it may, and would not, if he could, change a feature of her face or a fold of her garments. He takes in with his eye and embraces with his heart the outspread

scene; he beholds it not merely as it lies on the surface of the earth, but as it rests in the bosom of the deep blue concave above, and is enveloped within the fleecy folds of the clouds—and he proclaims the whole beautiful and divine. A careless, common observer may perceive something of beauty in the work of a great painter, and may believe that it could not have been produced by ordinary power or taste; but many of the separate details of the picture he shall judge either useless or positive blemishes, and the whole, as a whole, he cannot feel and is unable to appreciate. It is the eye of the artist alone, that can comprehend and feel the genius of the great work, and can perceive how every line, every shade and every touch, contributes to the triumph of the whole, and how, if a single stroke were wanting, it would damage the entire effect.

Beyond all question, it is true universally, in nature, in art, in history, in biography, in character and in life, that a man can find outside of him only what he has an inner capacity of perceiving and appreciating; can feel only what he has an inner power of feeling, and can see only what his organ of sight presents to him. There must be a living eye before anything can be visible to us. There must be a true, warm heart, before any fact of history or any touch

of character can waken us up and enkindle a genuine response. Thus far, there must be a sensibility, a susceptibility, before we can penetrate, to its depth, the great soul of nature or of art, of history or of biography.

No one at all acquainted with M. Renan's writings could think of charging him, generally, with want of warmth, want of enthusiasm, or susceptibility. He is, on the contrary, distinguished even in French literature for this very quality, an exquisite, a rare, a delicate, a discriminating and most genial sense of the beautiful in thought, in feeling, and in expression. The " Vie de Jésus," in spite of the limits which his preconceived idea imposes, contains many passages of ravishing splendour, in which his admiration and his love of the Saviour rise almost to inspired and empassioned rapture. The closing passage of the volume stands thus: " La grande originalité renaîtra-t-elle, ou le monde se contentera-t-il désormais de suivre les voies ouvertes par les hardis créateurs des vieux âges? Nous l'ignorons. Mais quels que puissent être les phénomènes inattendus de l'avenir, Jésus ne sera pas surpassé. Son culte se rajeunira sans cesse; sa légende provoquera des larmes sans fin; ses souffrances attendriront les meilleurs cœurs; tous les siècles proclameront qu'entre les fils des hommes il n'en est pas né de plus grand que

Jésus."* Referring to the woman of Samaria and to the words, "The hour cometh and now is, when the true worshippers shall worship the Father in spirit and in truth," he thus writes: "Le jour où il prononça cette parole, il fut vraiment fils de Dieu. Il dit, pour la première fois, le mot sur lequel reposera l'édifice de la religion éternelle. Il fonda le culte pur, sans date, sans patrie, celui que pratiqueront les âmes élevées, jusqu'à la fin des temps. Non-seulement sa religion, ce jour-là, fut la bonne religion de l'humanité, ce fut la religion absolue; et si d'autres planètes ont des habitants doués de raison et de moralité, leur religion ne peut être différente de celle que Jésus a proclamée près du puits de Jacob. L'homme n'a pu s'y tenir; car on n'atteint l'idéal qu'un moment. Le mot de Jésus a été un éclair dans une nuit obscure; il a fallu dix-huit cents ans pour que les yeux de l'humanité (que dis-je! d'une portion infiniment petite de l'humanité) s'y soient habitués. Mais l'éclair deviendra le plein jour; et, après avoir parcouru tous les cercles d'erreurs,

* "Vie de Jésus," p. 459. Paris, 1864. "Shall grand immortality be born again, or shall the world be content hereafter to follow the paths thrown open by the brave creators of ancient epochs? We know not. But be the unlooked for phenomena of the future what they may, Jesus shall not be surpassed. His worship shall renew its youth without end, his story shall drive forth ceaseless tears, his sufferings shall soften the best hearts, and all the ages shall proclaim, that, among the sons of men, there is not one born greater than Jesus."

l'humanité reviendra à ce mot-là, comme à l'expression immortelle de sa foi et de ses espérances." *

Once more,—having described, in few and touching words, the crucifixion and death of Jesus—he thus breaks forth in a splendid apostrophe: "Repose maintenant dans ta gloire, noble initiateur! Ton œuvre est achevée; ta divinité est fondée. Ne crains plus de voir crouler par une faute l'édifice de tes efforts. Désormais hors des atteintes de la fragilité, tu assisteras, du haut de la paix divine, aux conséquences infinies de tes actes. Au prix de quelques heures de souffrance, qui n'ont pas même atteint ta grande âme, tu as acheté la plus complète immortalité. Pour des milliers d'années le monde va relever de toi! Drapeau de nos contradictions, tu seras le signe

* "Vie de Jésus," pp. 234-5. "The day when he pronounced these words, he was truly the Son of God. For the first time, he proclaimed the truth, on which the edifice of the eternal religion shall repose. He founded the pure worship, belonging to no special period or country, that which all lofty souls shall practise to the end of time. On this day, his religion was not only the best religion of mankind, it was the absolute religion; and if other planets have inhabitants, endowed with reason and morality, their religion cannot be different from that which Jesus proclaimed beside the well of Jacob. Man has not been able to hold by it, for the ideal is reached only for a moment. The saying of Jesus has been as brightness in a dark night; it has taken 1800 years to accustom the eyes of mankind (what say I? of an infinitely small part of mankind) to it. But the light shall become the full day; and, after having run through all the circles of error, humanity shall return to this saying, as the immortal utterance of its faith and of its hopes."

autour duquel se livrera la plus ardente bataille. Mille fois plus vivant, mille fois plus aimé depuis ta mort que durant les jours de ton passage ici-bas, tu deviendras à tel point la pierre angulaire de l'humanité, qu'arracher ton nom de ce monde serait l'ébranler jusq'uaux fondements. Entre toi et Dieu on ne distinguera plus. Pleinement vainqueur de la mort prends possession de ton royaume, où te suivront, par la voie royale que tu as tracée, des siècles d'adorateurs."*

O si sic omnia! In these and not a few other passages of exquisite beauty and power, there are no signs of defective sensibility or susceptibility. Far otherwise. But in the full face, and with a cordial

* "Vie de Jésus," p. 426. "Noble Initiator, repose now in thy glory! Thy work is achieved, thy divinity is established. No more fear to see the building which thy efforts have reared fall to pieces through defect. Henceforth, beyond the reach of frailty, thou, from the height of divine peace, shalt help forward the infinite consequences of thine acts. At the price of some hours of suffering, which never even touched thy great soul, thou hast gained the most perfect immortality. For thousands of years, the world will extol thee. Banner of our contradictions, thou shalt be the standard around which a battle the most fierce shall be fought. A thousand times more living, a thousand times more loved since thy death than during the days of thy course here below, thou shalt become the corner-stone of humanity, insomuch that, to tear thy name from this world, would be to shake it to its very foundations. No more shall men distinguish between thee and God. Complete vanquisher of death, take possession of thy kingdom, and thither ages of adorers shall follow thee, in the royal road which thou hast traced out."

appreciation of such noble utterances, I venture to think that it is only too possible to discover in M. Renan's work strong evidence that, in one direction, and in regard to the purest and rarest form of moral beauty, he is painfully deficient. He wants the eye to perceive and the soul to feel the very highest and most sacred glories of the spiritual character of Jesus. The proof of this is reserved in the mean time, that we may turn, as promised, to M. Renan's method of dealing with the facts of the New Testament.

It may seem of little moment to make out a charge of inaccuracy and misjudgment as to certain facts about to be named. But there is much more in these facts than meets the eye, at first sight. What matters it, the reader may imagine, if M. Renan fixes the birth of Jesus at Nazareth and not at Bethlehem? It matters this much, that a historian is untrustworthy who sets aside the double testimony of two Evangelists, and asserts as true a conjecture of his own which no one of the four even hints at. It matters still more, when two Evangelists are charged with either themselves inventing or with taking up a sheer falsehood, in order to support an unfounded claim. And it matters most of all, when the moral character of Jesus Himself is darkened and He is seen to give His countenance to a falsehood, and to take pleasure in its circulation.

What matters it, the reader may imagine, whether John or Jesus was the superior? But it is of immense importance whether or not the four Evangelists may be coolly ignored; whether or not, from the first, Jesus set Himself by every means to gain reputation; whether or not He tried to shelter Himself under John's patronage; and most of all, whether or not, in order to lay a foundation for His future success, He coveted and obtained the public approval of the great Prophet.

I. Nazareth is distinguished by the Evangelists, as "the city (or town) of Joseph and Mary"—probably the place where they both resided before their marriage, and where they afterwards continued to reside, except during a short interval passed in Bethlehem. There is no question that in this town the childhood, the youth, and the manhood of Jesus, till He was thirty years of age, were spent. Nazareth and its vicinity are called by the Evangelists, "His own country." It was universally known that He had been all his life an inhabitant of this village, and belonged to it. "Jesus of Nazareth," or "the Nazarene," was the constant designation by which He was distinguished. In His full manhood, few, if any, may have even known of His earlier connexion with any other town. But M. Renan, though not by any

means on these grounds alone, decides that Nazareth —and not Bethlehem—was the birth-place of Christ as well as His life-long residence.

Although so much is involved in this question of fact, it is discussed and settled in the compass of a few lines. The discrepancies, seeming or real, in the genealogies of Matthew and Luke, are very shortly referred to; the date of "the taxing," a point of immense difficulty, and on which the highest authorities are to this day divided, is, more shortly still, pronounced to be at least ten years later than the birth of Jesus; and the whole story of Bethlehem is summarily banished to the region of mere legend.* On purely historical ground alone, this chronological question cannot be absolutely determined. M. Renan himself admits that "the precise date of Jesus' birth is unknown."* And the Christian chronology, now universally adopted, it is well understood, was not fixed till several centuries after the death of Christ, and is acknowledged by all to be inexact, though by how many years cannot now be ascertained.

It might have been anticipated with some confidence that, in these circumstances, a chronological difficulty, of small extent at the most, and, besides, judged by no mean authorities to be explicable,

* Vie de Jésus, pp. 19, 20.

would not have been allowed to weigh very much by an impartial and cautious critic. But this difficulty is held to be so grave and so insurmountable, that it is suffered to alter fundamentally the life of Jesus, and, more than this, to invalidate and utterly set aside the testimony of historians who, nevertheless, are held to be generally authentic.

The birth of Jesus is circumstantially related by Matthew and Luke. Mark and John make no reference to the birth or the early life of Christ, and begin their narrative from His introduction to John the Baptist and His entrance on His public ministry. But two faithful witnesses are enough to establish any not impossible fact. We say nothing of the angels and the shepherds, and nothing of the star and its guiding power. M. Renan would relegate these to the sphere of legendary exaggeration. Be it so. But two authentic historians have distinctly and at length detailed the birth at Bethlehem. What is far more, one of them has connected this with a notorious and atrocious fact in the history of the government of their country—the murder of the innocents at Bethlehem—a fact which is inexplicable and incredible, save on some such ground as he represents. Say that the Gospel of Matthew was written at any date prior to the destruction of Jerusalem, thousands must have been alive, able and

ready to detect and, for the sake of their country, to denounce the falsehood, had it been a falsehood. With the detailed and clear testimony of two historians—a testimony, not relating to anything miraculous or supernatural, but to a matter of fact which was either altogether true, or altogether false, and the truth or falsehood of which was easily discoverable at the time—with such testimony of two historians, acknowledged to be authentic, there is no room for loose and independent "divination and conjecture."

But M. Renan makes free use of both of these dangerous instruments, and does so on principle. Here, he divines an underlying motive in the writers, and he conjectures a foundation, at the least not honourable, for what he takes to be a pure legend. It is not true, he alleges, that Jesus was descended from David, and not true that His reputed parents were obliged to travel to Bethlehem, the city of David, to be enrolled.* Besides, he pronounces confidently, that at the date referred to there was no house of David in existence, and no known descendants of David's family. This last allegation is almost unaccountable. How can it be credited, as even possibly true in the remotest degree? Could the Evangelists, as sane men, have commited so stupid a

* Vie de Jésus, pp. 237—239.

blunder, when they knew that any contemporary could have at once convicted them of falsehood? M. Renan's explanation of the Bethlehem story is shortly this: The prevailing idea in Judea was that the Messiah was to be a descendant of David. The legend, therefore, was invented that Jesus was born of the royal line, and for further confirmation the story was got up, that His reputed parents went to Bethlehem "in the days of the taxing." It is left to our readers honestly to determine for themselves, whether or not M. Renan ignores some authentic facts, and imagines and creates others, without authority.

II. The relation in which John the Baptist and Jesus stood to each other and to each other's work is very intelligible in the Gospels. They were of the same age, within a few months; they were very nearly connected on the mother's side, but so far as appears they were personally strangers to each other, and had never once met for thirty years. This is accounted for, partly by the remoteness of their places of residence, but chiefly by the long years spent by John in the seclusion of the wilderness. Their very first interview, if the silence of the Evangelists be significant, was the one which took place on the banks of the Jordan. Jesus was prompt to acknowledge in John a true prophet of God, yea,

more than a prophet, Jehovah's promised Messenger, sent to prepare the way of Messiah; and in his baptism he gave a public testimony to the Divine authority of the Forerunner.

M. Renan represents Jesus* as coming to John, accompanied by His disciples, and remaining in attendance on the ministry of the Baptist for some weeks at least. But he does this in the face of the four Evangelists, three relating in full, and the fourth referring to, the baptism of Jesus, but all four without a word or hint or the most remote indication that any disciples accompanied Him. He does this on the mere strength of his imagination. It is a pure fancy that Jesus at this time was known to fame at all, that He had acquired any reputation as a religious teacher, or that He had done anything which had attracted public notice. His quiet consistency as a child, a youth, and a man, and His wise, pure, sweet, beautiful spirit could not fail to be observed and to make themselves felt even in such a place as Nazareth. He must have been an influence, a powerful influence, in His native village through all His life; but, so far as appears from the record, it was quiet, silent, almost insensible, like the dew or the light. His station was too obscure, and His disposition was too meek and too gentle, for notoriety. He worked

* Vie de Jésus, p. 105.

as a common carpenter, and pursued His daily labour at the bench, till He was thirty years of age. He must have been felt in His own sphere, imperceptibly felt, but He was little known, and not noted at all.

Irresistible proof of this is found in the fact, that when He did come forth into publicity, His fellow-townsmen and fellow-countrymen of Galilee, and even His immediate relatives, were utterly confounded. Had He been in any degree noted beforehand, had He been marked as a reader or a speaker in the synagogue, especially had He at all taken, as M. Renan imagines, His place as a religious teacher, and gained some reputation in this character, it is certain that when He attempted a more public sphere, at the least, His family and His friends and His countrymen could not have wondered at what was merely a natural and successful progress. But they did wonder, and, for some time after His public life commenced, they were confounded, as at something which they could never have expected; they even imagined that He had become deranged. When a vast multitude was gathered together, "His friends sought to lay hold on Him; for they said, He is beside Himself."* Elsewhere we read, "Neither did His brethren believe in Him."† And His countrymen when they heard Him in the synagogue

* Mark iii. 21. † John vii. 5.

said, "Is not this the carpenter, the son of Mary, the brother of James, and Joses, and of Juda and Simon? and are not His sisters here with us? And they were offended at Him." * It is plain that Jesus can have had no previous, gradually-advancing reputation, and that nothing in His former life had prepared His countrymen, or even His relatives, to expect the course which He afterwards pursued. The notion of fame as a religious teacher, and of disciples attached to Him, previous to His presenting Himself to John the Baptist, is a mere unsustained flight of imagination.

But we should err egregiously were we to suppose that this notion is altogether harmless, because it is groundless. M. Renan, as we shall see, has a very important reason for it, and, we doubt not for a moment, a thoroughly upright purpose in it. He has to "divine and conjecture," through means of this, why Jesus and His disciples came to John the aptist. But he is obliged to make a wide departure from the authentic facts. So far as the record goes, the impression unquestionably is conveyed by each and all of the four Evangelists that Jesus was superior to John, and was so acknowledged by him at the time. M. Renan imagines that John was the superior, and was followed, through at least several

* Mark vi. 3.

weeks, by Jesus and His disciples, as their avowed master. What is more, Jesus thus acted in order that He might gain, what was of the highest importance to His own success, John's public approbation and recognition; "for all men counted John that he was a prophet indeed." M. Renan distinctly affirms that "for some time Jesus was the imitator of John," was deeply influenced, even injuriously, by John's spirit, and gained from him at least "some lessons in preaching and in popular action."*

All this is not only mere gratuitous assumption, it is flatly contradicted by the whole of the evidence. To the multitudes around him John declared, "I indeed baptize you with water; but one, mightier than I, cometh, the latchet of whose shoes I am not worthy to unloose: He shall baptize you with the Holy Ghost and with fire."† Jesus, unattended, undistinguished, amidst multitudes pressing to be baptized, presented Himself to John, and John knew Him not, though His near relation. Perhaps John had never seen him in the flesh before. A sign from heaven was afterwards given, which banished all doubt. But something, at the moment, in his look and form, perhaps a few words from those lips into which grace was poured, or the strange electric power of consanguinity, or that finer magnetism which touches

* Vie de Jésus, pp. 107, 115. † Luke iii. 16.

kindred souls—something seems to have startled and convinced the Baptist, and then "John forbad him, saying, I have need to be baptized of Thee, and comest Thou to me? And Jesus answering, said to him, Suffer it to be so now; for thus it becometh us to fulfil all righteousness."* It was a due and meet thing that the Divine authority of the Lord's messenger should be recognised by the Lord Himself. Afterwards "John seeth Jesus coming unto him, and saith, Behold the Lamb of God, who taketh away the sin of the world. This is He of whom I said, After me cometh a man which is preferred before me; for He was before me."†

Again it is left to our readers, honestly to determine for themselves, whether or not M. Renan ignores some authentic facts and imagines and creates others, without authority.

III. M. Renan distinctly maintains that "passion underlay the character of Jesus."‡ Gentle and sweet, and meek and loving, at the first, the impression is irresistibly conveyed by M. Renan, that He was, by and bye, hurt and wounded, goaded and irritated, and that He became morose, and soured, and harsh,§ subject to fits of severity, and above all so oppressed

* Matt. iii. 14, 15. † John i. 29, 30.
‡ Vie de Jésus, p. 325 § Ib. p. 312.

and crushed by the weight of His mission that at last He was almost beside Himself, and was carried away by the impetuosity of His feelings and His temper. "Pressant, impératif, il ne souffrait aucune opposition .... Sa douceur naturelle semblait l'avoir abandonné ; il était quelquefois rude et bizarre. Ses disciples, par moments, ne le comprenaient plus, et éprouvaient devant lui une espèce de sentiment de crainte. Quelquefois sa mauvaise humeur contre toute résistance l'entraînait jusqu'à des actes inexplicables et en apparence absurdes. Ce n'est pas que sa vertu baissât ; mais sa lutte au nom de l'idéal contre la réalité devenait insoutenable. Il se meurtrissait et se révoltait au contact de la terre. L'obstacle l'irritait .... Les hommes, en le touchant, l'abaissaient à leur niveau."*

A multitude of texts are referred to by M. Renan in support of these very painful and, we hope to show, very unfounded statements. The texts are grouped together, with little regard to the order

* "Vie de Jésus," pp. 319, 320. "Urgent and imperative, he could bear no opposition. . . . . His natural sweetness seemed to have forsaken him ; he was sometimes severe and wilful. At times his disciples could not comprehend him, and in his presence experienced a species of dread. Sometimes his displeasure at the smallest resistance hurried him into acts unaccountable and apparently absurd. It was not that his virtue was lowered ; but his struggle for the ideal against the reality became insupportable. He was crushed and shocked by contact with the earth. Obstacles irritated him. . . . Contact with men brought him down to their level."

[illegible]

ness of men, the misappreciation, the hostility, the ingratitude, the hatred, the treachery, the cruelty, and the indignities which Jesus had to bear—we might pronounce unhesitatingly that, in the case of any mere human being, this effect must have resulted. The wonder is that in the case of Jesus it did not result. But it did not.

Among the texts pointed out by M. Renan, one or more refer to the storm on the lake, when Jesus uttered such words as these, "Why are ye so fearful? "How is it that ye have no faith?" "Oh ye of little faith." Others refer to a case in which the disciples had failed to relieve a person brought to them supposed to be possessed by a demon, and in which Jesus rebuked them, saying, "Oh, faithless and perverse generation, how long shall I be with you?—how long shall I bear with you?" In the first and in the second of these classes of instances, it is almost beyond belief that any, we say not unprepossessed, but even unprejudiced mind could imagine that there was the feeblest indication of a passionate and impetuous nature. The words of Jesus are the manifest expression of a deep, loving, compassionate regret that His disciples had as yet profited so little by His presence and His teaching; for He knew, though they knew not, that, in no long time, both were to be withdrawn, and that they would be left alone in the world.

Others of the cited texts refer to cases in which the Pharisees watched to find occasion against Him —as, when He healed the man with the withered hand on the Sabbath-day, "He looked round upon them with anger, being grieved for the hardness of their hearts." This is the solitary passage in the Gospels which connects the word anger with the name of Jesus. But the passage itself indicates clearly that anger in the current human sense was impossible. His look, keen and penetrating, expressed profound emotion, but the very opposite of human wrath; for he was "grieved for the hardness of their hearts." The case of the woman who was healed by touching Christ's garment is referred to, though it is hard to comprehend for what reason. There was a crowd around Him at the time, and the disciples might well wonder why He asked, "Who touched me?" But He knew, what they did not know, that a cure had been effected, and He naturally turned round to see who the person was. Of impatience, or temper, or passion, there was none.

With only two or three exceptions, presently to be noticed, all the texts have been examined which are cited in proof of what M. Renan designates "acts inexplicable and absurd." All of them belong to the earlier, not the later, ministry of Jesus. If, therefore, they were as strong as we have judged them

to be feeble, they contain at least not a particle of evidence for what is maintained—a gradual and growing loss of self-control, an ever increasing irritability and impatience.

The three additional instances now to be produced stand, in some respects, alone in the life of our Lord. The herd of swine that perished in the sea, the withering of the fig-tree, and the overturning of the tables of the money-changers in the temple. The withering of the fig-tree* it is not easy satisfactorily to explain. What it means and what end it served, at all events, does not lie on the surface. But is it an extravagant stretch of humility to suppose that it might have an important meaning at the time, and might have served an important purpose, though we fail to discover either the one or the other? At all events, to pronounce authoritatively that it is "inexplicable and absurd," and that it argued a wild and idle vindictiveness in our Lord, seems something far worse than presumption. Of the marvellous occurrence in the temple, the Evangelist John gives the following account: "Jesus found in the temple those that sold sheep and oxen and doves, and the changers of money, sitting: and when He had made a

* See an ingenious and natural interpretation in a new translation of the Gospel of Matthew, by the Rev. J. H. Godwin. (Bagster and Sons. 1863.)

scourge of small cords, He drove them all out of the temple, and the sheep and the oxen; and poured out the changers' money and overthrew the tables." An extreme course, on the face of it, apparently violent and almost unjust! But if there be one thing more certain than another here, it is this—the deed cannot have been done in temper, in passion. A young man, a poor working carpenter, to have attempted such a thing in a rage, and to have been allowed to succeed in the attempt, is absolutely unbelievable. His look and His manner—far away from human passion—must have conveyed resistlessly that He was more, mysteriously more, than He seemed to be. That look and that manner must have gone down into their souls, and struck them dumb and powerless. With perfect ease they could have resisted Him and driven Him off, in disgrace. But they durst not. If, as the Evangelist John relates, this happened on the first, as well as, according to the Synoptics, on the last visit to the temple which Jesus made, it is then not difficult to imagine how and why He was so profoundly moved. His whole soul was stirred within Him, when for the first time, in His newly-announced position as God's Messiah, He looked on the shameless profanation and prostitution of His Father's house. The crying evil was put down at the time, but only for the time; and at His last passover Christ

had to reassert His authority. With calm, solemn unearthly, irresistible dignity, He acted as His Father's son, the ordained vindicator of His honour and His rights. The miracle was, that He was suffered to do this without resistance. But He was.

Perhaps it is to the story of the swine in the country of the Gadarenes that M. Renan would, chiefly of all, apply his severe words, "inexplicable and absurd." Nevertheless, we may be allowed to ask, whether dismissing, as he would, here and everywhere, the supernatural and miraculous, it be altogether an impossible, or even an unlikely thing, that the near presence of a furious and uncontrollable lunatic, writhing and roaring in the awful agonies of madness, should cause a herd of swine to rush down the steep, and perish in the sea. Be this as it may, the occurrence is narrated as belonging to the earlier, not the later ministry of Jesus, far away from Jerusalem, on the other side of the lake of Gennesaret. Whatever, therefore, it may prove, it cannot prove what M. Renan seems to convey, an excess of passionateness and an entire loss of self-control towards the close of Christ's career.

Of all imputations possible to be laid against the character of the Redeemer, "mauvaise humeur," want of self-command, violent intolerance, as it is among the most afflicting to the Christian heart, is also

among the most unfounded. Surely, there is something due to the sacredest and tenderest associations of millions of wise and good men. I will not, I do not, accuse M. Renan even here, of the smallest dishonesty or insincerity. On the contrary, I can thoroughly believe that nothing but a desperate conviction of truth, as he saw it, could have compelled him to keep nothing back which was really in his mind. But, surely, his honesty might have, and ought to have been tempered and restrained by the feeling that he was piercing to the very quick, and lacerating, and torturing the hearts of millions to whom the blessed Jesus is dearer far, than life.

Let it be understood that severity was a most marked, though only an occasional characteristic of Christ's teaching and Christ's life. Without this attribute, He could not have been the great master-soul or the good and true man, both of which M. Renan imagines Him to be. If in the moral condition of Judea, He saw a tremendous obstruction to that reign of God which He proclaimed a reign of rectitude and purity and truth and love, how could He fail to denounce that condition, and to warn His country and His age? It was "an evil generation,"—"an evil and apostate generation"—"a sinful generation"—"a wicked generation"—"a perverse generation." "The blood of all the prophets shed from the foundation of the

world, shall be required of this generation."* But one class of his countrymen were the especial objects of Christ's deep aversion, because, though they were the most guilty, they were also the most hardened and irreclaimable. The Pharisees, numbering amongst them though they did many wise and good men, were, as a party and as a whole, the incarnation of all that Jesus deplored and abhorred.

"Against hypocrisy, formalism, pretence, Jesus lifted up His voice in the severest tones. "Beware of the leaven of the Pharisees, which is hypocrisy." "Woe unto you, scribes, and Pharisees, hypocrites." "Ye shut the kingdom of heaven against men, and neither go in yourselves nor suffer them that are entering to go in." "Ye love greetings in the market-places, and the uppermost rooms at feasts, and the chief seats in the synagogues." "Ye bind heavy burdens on men's shoulders, but ye yourselves will not touch them with one of your fingers." "Ye devour widows' houses, and for a pretence make long prayers." "Ye compass sea and land to make one proselyte; and when he is made, he is tenfold more the child of hell than before." "Ye cleanse the outside, but within ye are full of extortion and excess." "Ye strain at a gnat, and swallow a camel." "Ye blind guides." "Oh, fools, and blind." "Whited

* Matthew, Mark, and Luke, *passim*.

sepulchres; outwardly ye appear righteous, but within ye are full of hypocrisy and iniquity." "Ye serpents, ye generation of vipers, how shall ye escape the damnation of hell?"* "How withering, how blasting, must such words have been from such lips! But imagine a young man, outwardly conditioned as Jesus had hitherto been and at this moment actually was, equal to such thinking and such daring, and, still more, tolerated for an instant in uttering such words —and all the while to be no other and no more than he seemed to be! It is impossible."†

These stern and vehement utterances of Jesus were undoubtedly pronounced on His last visit to Jerusalem, and very shortly before His crucifixion. To them M. Renan especially refers in proof of his charge, perhaps even more than to the texts formerly examined. But do they, or can they, prove that at this stage He had lost all self-control and almost the sober exercise of His reason, and that He had abandoned Himself to the fury and the impetuosity of human passion? It is revolting even to suggest such a question, and it is almost beyond belief that M. Renan, or that any honest mind, could venture to answer it in the affirmative. Without doubt, there was very much in the circumstances to provoke and incense and madden, and to arouse, in any mere human breast, the deadliest

* Matthew xxiii. 13—33. † See pp. 64, 65.

spirit of revenge. These Pharisees and scribes and elders were the disgrace and the curse of their country, and their religion was only a cloak for their vile and vicious lives, for their licentiousness, rapacity, and cruelty. They were, besides, as treacherous and false as they were corrupt. From the first they were the enemies of Jesus, and now, at this very time, He knew that they were scheming and plotting to accomplish His death. In any other case than this, the most rancorous indignation and the most vehement resentment must have been aroused against them, and would at least have been quite natural. But, in His case, there is not a shadow of evidence to prove either revenge or hatred. Severe as His words of reprehension were, they admit of an interpretation beyond measure more rational, more natural, as well as more generous. It is not only conceivable, it is certain, that even a man, a wise and good man, without a spark of resentment or wrath, in the low and guilty sense of these passions, and in a spirit of the profoundest pity and love, and with the sole and intense desire to unmask, expose, and correct hypocrisy and corruption, could have employed all the words which fell from the lips of Jesus. True, they were strong and stern words, burning and consuming. How could they but be so, in the presence of hypocrisy, of cloaked and sanctified vileness? He must have been

false to Himself, to His convictions, and to His holiest feelings,—He must have pandered to the vile, He must have quailed before the dread of their revenge, had He employed other than the scathing terms he did.

An empassioned nature! Yes, Jesus had an empassioned nature! the most empassioned and intense nature that ever dwelt in a human frame. Love of God, love of man, abhorrence of evil and desire for its extirpation, were passions in Him, whose depth and strength no other human breast ever knew. But to the bad passions of humanity, to revenge, hatred, malice, wrath, He was a sworn stranger, and nothing He ever did, and nothing He ever said, can be justly classed with these vices. We forget that this Being, now standing erect in His abhorrence and unsparing condemnation of vice, was the same, who only a few days before bowed His head, and wept over the doomed capital of His country—"If thou hadst known, even thou, at least in this thy day, the things which belong to thy peace; but now they are hid from thine eyes." "O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, how often would I have gathered thy children together even as a hen doth gather her chickens under her wings, and ye would not." And shall we dare to imagine in Him—for it is mere imagination—a weakness, a debasement, a violence, a wrath which would render a thousand other undoubted

manifestations of His deep soul, not only inconsistent, but inconceivable and impossible? This Being! was the same who was cherished with the warmest affection, not only by tender women, but by strong, hard, common men, who clung to Him through life, and in after years, when He was gone, toiled, and suffered, and bled, and died joyfully for His name's sake. This Being! was the same who, a few days later, met His chosen disciples in the upper room, and forgetting Himself, and all the hazards and the terrors that were thickening around Him, thought chiefly of them, and spoke such words of comfort and courage and tender love and holy wisdom as were never uttered in this world, before or since. This Being! was the same who, taking three of His disciples, passed into the garden of Gethsemane, and there prayed and wrestled in His mysterious agony. He had asked the disciples to watch at a distance while He prayed alone. It was a fearful hour for Him, in which He needed and sought human sympathy. But He came to the disciples and found them fast asleep. Was His impetuous temper roused, was He irritated and wounded, by this heartless neglect? Did He storm and rebuke in harsh and bitter words? No. "Could ye not watch with me one hour?" was all He said, and said in sorrow, not in anger. And then humbly and meekly He added in excuse, "The spirit indeed is

willing, but the flesh is weak." Again, after this gentle reproof, He left them, and when again He returned and found them again asleep, He only said, "Sleep on now and take your rest. Behold, the hour is at hand, and the Son of man is betrayed into the hands of sinners." This Being! was the same who, when the band of soldiers entered the garden, went calmly up to them and asked, "Whom seek ye?" Instead of bewilderment, loss of reason and of self-command—instead of irascibility, impatience, or terror, He calmly said, "I am Jesus of Nazareth, whom ye seek." This Being! was the same who, worn with want of rest and with awful anxiety, was dragged from the indignities and cruelties of the Sanhedrim, through the weary hours of that awful night, and hurried at sunrise to the tribunal of Pilate. Did He there betray impatience, or vehement passion, or revenge, or terror? Pale with exhaustion, He only stood in perfect silence and calmness. Amidst all the furious charges brought against him, He held His peace. Amidst mocking, and scourging, and spitting, crowned with thorns and clothed in mock purple, He held His peace. At last, when asked, "Art thou a king?" He calmly uttered the immortal sentence, "To this end was I born, and for this cause came I into the world, that I should bear witness unto the truth. Every one that is of the truth,

heareth my voice." This Being! was the same who, on the Cross, amidst scorn and curses, uttered no sound of wrath or revenge, but breathed out His last breath in the words, "Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do,"—words for the first time in the whole history of the world, heard by human ears, and never to perish or be forgotten; words struck out from a centre never before touched by man; which no religion, no philosophy, no genius, no poetry of man, ever inspired—a legacy to the world, inexhaustible and immortal; rich, ever since, in holy, loving, Divine fruits, and which shall continue to produce glorious returns of purest good, so long as the world lasts, and beyond all time, in the eternal cycles.

IV. The inner, Spiritual nature of Jesus. I approach this portion of my task with unmixed repugnance; but it cannot be escaped, and it ought not to be escaped. M. Renan is entitled to express, and he does express without reserve, his convictions and his judgment respecting Jesus of Nazareth, however opposed they be to a long consecrated faith.

Jesus, whatever else or more He be, is an undoubted historical personage, a true human being who once lived in our world, and of whose life, and sayings and doings, authentic accounts are extant at this day. The results of His life and of His death are unques-

tionably very essential elements in determining what and who He really was. But all that relates to His personal development can be gathered solely from the extant accounts and from contemporary history. Be it so. If Jesus be a mere man and no more, and if thus He can be interpreted, let Him be thus interpreted!

M. Renan offers such an interpretation, and thus speaks: "Jésus accepta ces idées, généralement répandues chez ses contemporains. Il en fit le point d'appui de son action, ou, pour mieux dire, l'un de ses points d'appui; car il avait un sentiment trop profond de son œuvre véritable pour l'établir uniquement sur des principes aussi fragiles, aussi exposés à recevoir des faits une foudroyante réfutation." * "Ici, comme dans plusieurs autres circonstances de sa vie, Jésus se plia aux idées qui avaient cours de son temps, bien qu'elles ne fussent pas précisément les siennes." † "A toutes les époques, d'ailleurs, Jésus céda beaucoup à l'opinion, et adopta bien des choses qui n'étaient pas dans sa direction, ou dont il se souciait assez peu, par l'unique raison qu'elles étaient

* "Vie de Jésus," p. 281. "Jesus accepted those ideas which were generally spread among his contemporaries. He made them his basis of action, or rather one of his bases, for he had too deep a feeling of his true work, to found it solely on principles so feeble and ever exposed to the destructive refutation of facts."

† "Vie de Jésus," pp. 238, 239. "Here, as in many other circumstances of his life, Jesus conformed himself to the ideas which were current in his age, though they were not exactly his own."

populaires."* "Le besoin que Jésus avait de se donner du crédit, et l'enthousiasme de ses disciples, entassaient les notions contradictoires."†

But where is the evidence? In what instances did Jesus accept current ideas not His own, or conform to anything because it was popular, though Himself indifferent or averse to it? Where did He pander to the people, or to any class, or to a single individual? Did He concede to the Priests, or to the Pharisees, or to the rulers, or to the rich and influential? Where? When? Did He humour in order to gain the people, when He exposed and denounced their vices and branded them as "a wicked and apostate generation," and threatened them with a coming national retribution? Did He fall in with the accepted and cherished notions respecting the Messiah, when He invariably put aside the idea of a temporal prince and a temporal Kingdom, and invariably announced a purely spiritual reign, not over men, merely or chiefly, but within them—a reign of righteousness and purity and truth and love?

* "Vie de Jésus," p. 107. "At all times Jesus conceded much to general opinion, and, for the sole reason that they were popular, adopted many things, either not according to his mind, or for which he cared very little."

† Ibid. p. 251. "The necessity of gaining credit for himself, together with the enthusiasm of his disciples, heaped up contradictory notions."

These questions answer themselves. But M. Renan advances further still, and makes charges yet more direct and more appalling.

Miracles are discarded absolutely, and the connexion of Jesus with phenomena so called, is variously explained. Direct, entire dishonesty and trickery are not imputed, at least not broadly imputed. It is even suggested that the Saviour Himself believed that He was gifted with supernatural power, and that not a few of the facts recorded, or something like them, may have been due to the mere commanding presence of a superior person—to a glance of His eye, or a word from His lips. In addition to this, it is admitted that it is impossible in the record to distinguish what was only attributed to the Saviour from what He Himself actually took part in.* But it is at the same time distinctly conveyed that the prevailing belief in Judea, that miracles were the highest and the necessary proof of a Divine commission, necessitated, on the part of Jesus, so-called supernatural works, and that He sanctioned the popular belief in them, though they were unreal.

One of the names by which Jesus was distinguished by his followers, was, "Son of David." He never so called Himself, M. Renan alleges, for He knew that it was not true.† But "public opinion on this point

* Vie de Jésus, cap. 16, *passim.* † Ibid. pp. 236-37.

made him do violence to himself. He allowed a title to be given him, without which he could not hope for success. He ended by taking pleasure in it."

This is not all. Would that it were! "Toute idée, pour réussir, a besoin de faire des sacrifices ; on ne sort jamais immaculé de la lutte de la vie. Concevoir le bien, en effet, ne suffit pas : il faut le faire réussir parmi les hommes ; pour cela, des voies moins pures sont nécessaires."* "Il faut se rappeler aussi que, dans cette ville impure et pesante de Jérusalem, Jésus n'était plus lui-même. Sa conscience, par la faute des hommes et non par la sienne, avait perdu quelque chose de sa limpidité primordiale. Désespéré, poussé à bout, il ne s'appartenait plus. Sa mission s'imposait à lui, et il obéissait au torrent." †

Then follows a most humiliating and feeble account of the story of Lazarus, which M. Renan suggests as rendering probable what would otherwise be incredible. Happily, ordinary notions of credibility will scarcely endorse the fiction. Lazarus, it

* "Vie de Jésus," pp. 91, 92. "Every idea, in order to succeed, must make sacrifices; we never come out of the struggle of life without a stain. In reality, to conceive the good is not enough, we must make it triumph among men, and for this, less pure courses are necessary."

† Ibid. pp. 359–60. "We must remember that in the impure and oppressive city of Jerusalem, Jesus was no longer himself. His conscience, not by fault of his own, but of men, had lost something of its primitive transparency. Desperate, and driven to extremity, he was no longer master of himself. His mission bore down upon him, and he yielded to the torrent."

seems, was sick nigh unto death, and the presence of Jesus, it was thought, would revive and restore him. A message was sent, requesting the Saviour to come to Bethany. Meantime the family agreed among themselves to practise a strange deception on their dearest friend and on their countrymen. Lazarus, still pallid with disease, caused himself to be wrapped in bandages, as if dead, and to be shut up in the family tomb. Jesus on his arrival was met by the two sisters, and was at once conducted by them to the tomb. He desired to see once more the friend he loved so much. The stone was removed; and, to the astonishment of all, Lazarus came forth, alive. Jesus, certainly at first, was himself deceived, and all who saw believed, and reported a real resurrection; and Jesus, though he must soon have been aware of the fraud, suffered the report to be circulated, without contradiction.* I dare not trust myself to utter all I think and feel on this sacred subject. Nor is it needful. Anything more offensive or more incredible it would be difficult to imagine.

The ground on which M. Renan defends duplicity, deception, the adoption of ideas not one's own, falling in with popular notions and popular movements, though disapproved and disliked—defends even direct untruthfulness and dishonesty, and conceives them to

* Vie de Jésus, pp. 360-61.

be a necessity for all the great leaders of the ages—we shall have a better right to characterize as it deserves, after we have expressed his defence in his own words. Meantime it is this which supplies the strongest, the unanswerable reply to his production. Here, if there were nothing else, is what we must designate as the foul blot which vitiates and corrupts the whole, rendering it, not only false as an interpretation of Christ, but most injurious and pestilential. "Nous comprenons peu, avec nos natures froides et timorées, une telle façon d'être possédé par l'idée dont on se fait l'apôtre. Pour nous, races profondément sérieuses, la conviction signifie la sincérité avec soi-même. Mais la sincérité avec soi-même n'a pas beaucoup de sens chez les peuples orientaux, peu habitués aux délicatesses de l'esprit critique. Bonne foi et imposture sont des mots qui, dans notre conscience rigide, s'opposent comme deux termes inconciliables. En Orient il y a, de l'un à l'autre, mille fuites et mille détours .... La vérité matérielle a très-peu de prix pour l'Oriental; il voit tout à travers ses idées, ses intérêts, ses passions.

"L'histoire est impossible, si l'on n'admet hautement qu'il y a pour la sincérité plusieurs mesures. Toutes les grandes choses se font par le peuple; or, on ne conduit le peuple qu'en se prêtant à ses idées..... Celui qui prend l'humanité avec ses illusions, et

cherche à agir sur elle et avec elle, ne saurait être blâmé. César savait fort bien qu'il n'était pas fils de Vénus; la France ne serait pas ce qu'elle est, si l'on n'avait cru mille ans à la Sainte Ampoule de Reims. Il nous est facile à nous autres, impuissants que nous sommes, d'appeler cela mensonge, et, fiers de notre timide honnêteté, traiter avec dédain les héros qui ont accepté dans d'autres conditions la lutte de la vie. Quand nous aurons fait avec nos scrupules ce qu'ils firent avec leurs mensonges, nous aurons le droit d'être pour eux sévères."*

* "Vie de Jésus," pp. 252-53. "We, with our cold and timorous natures, can little comprehend that kind of possession by an idea, in the man who has made himself its apostle. For us, profoundly sincere races, conviction signifies sincerity within. But inward sincerity has not much meaning for Oriental nations, little used to the subtleties of the critical spirit. In our rigid conscience, good faith and imposture are words opposed, as two contradictory terms. In the East, they admit of a thousand subterfuges and evasions. . . . Literal truth is little valued by the Oriental; he sees everything, through his ideas, his interests and his passions.

"History is impossible, if we do not freely concede that there are many measures of sincerity. All great things are accomplished through the people, and the people can be led only by humouring their ideas. . . . . He who takes humanity, with its illusions, and seeks to act upon it and with it, should not be blamed. Cæsar knew very well that he was not the son of Venus; France would not now be what it is, if it had not for a thousand years believed in the Holy Vial of Rheims. It is easy for us, powerless as we are, to call this lying, and, proud of our timid honesty, to treat with disdain the heroes who under other conditions fought the battle of life. When we, with our scruples, shall have done what they have achieved by their falsehoods, we shall then have the right to be severe on them."

What can this mean, unless it be a defence of falsehood, duplicity, and insincerity, an attempt to palliate and gloss over these vices—dare I add, in Jesus? Essential moral distinctions! They are here, it would seem, scattered to the four winds; and truth, and honour, and honesty, may be trodden in the dust, for the sake of what can be gained by sacrificing them. M. Renan surely would never broadly avow the principle that the end sanctifies the means. He, along with every noble human soul, must reject it with indignation. The history of humanity records not a few august examples of those who could sacrifice everything they possessed, property and liberty, and life itself, but could not and would not sacrifice truth and justice and uprightness. And, imperfect as the world is, these are the men who are admired as its most venerated heroes, and whose memory shall live to the latest generation. It is denied utterly that the East and the West, the North and the South, do essentially differ in their moral perceptions. It is too true that in certain conditions of savage degradation, and equally in certain conditions of a corrupted civilization, false estimates both of virtue and of vice are created. Conscience, like every power of human nature, is capable of being impaired as well as of being improved. There are, it is true, "many measures of sincerity." Nations, and ages, and individuals

do estimate differently this virtue and its opposite vice, but all the while they distinctly know what the virtue and the vice are, and know also that their estimate of them does not in the least affect their intrinsic nature. A lie is a lie, a mean, a base, a guilty thing, to the Asiatic and the European, to the Italian, the Frenchman, and the Englishman, and simple truthfulness, simple uprightness is a virtue, all the world and all the ages over. Nor will M. Renan question for a moment, that the higher men rise in the scale of moral excellence, the more intensely do they admire and love rectitude and truth, and the more profoundly do they detest falsehood and insincerity.

"History (human history) is impossible unless we freely concede that there are many measures of sincerity." Unquestionably so. Human history must recognise the diversities of moral character, the evil as well as the good in men, because these are invariable and universal facts; and any history of a mere human being which ignored them could only be an unmitigated falsehood. All men, the greatest and the humblest, in all countries and in all ages, have been imperfect and evil in various degrees. Kings, princes, and subjects, statesmen, politicians, priests, judges, and warriors, all are found in various ways, and either more or less, to have

schemed and plotted for their different ends—to have acquired and preserved power or wealth or success of any kind—not always by legitimate means, not always by simple honesty and justice and truth—but by manœuvring, by deception, by duplicity, by craft, by falsehood, by treachery, and by violence. A history of a mere human being absolutely perfect must be pronounced, on the face of it, untrue, either a falsehood or a fiction.

We have reached in this statement the fundamental principle on which M. Renan constructs his argument, and which governs the entire course of thought and illustration. He has a fixed and foregone conclusion. Jesus is a man, and no more. He can be no more. Of all miracles, a Divine Incarnation is the most impossible. M. Renan would reason with himself thus, and does virtually thus reason: The greatest men that ever lived in the past ages, the priests, the kings, the legislators, the benefactors of the world, all were men, imperfect men, sharing more or less in the weaknesses, the follies, and the vices of their human brothers. An absolutely perfect man never has appeared on this earth, never will and never can appear. M. Renan opens the Gospels, to find in them what he believes they must contain—the history of a man who, however great and good, must be like his race, imperfect, a sharer, to

some extent, in the weaknesses, the errors, and the sins of common humanity. Employing, as I have sought to show, not a rational, impartial induction of the whole of the facts as they lie in the record, but very largely "divination and conjecture," drawing also very largely on his imagination and his power of arbitrary combination, he honestly labours to make out what to him is alone a conceivable, a possible human character. But it must be a human character, that is, an imperfect character, exhibiting a side of evil as well as a side of good.

We find what we seek, we see what we expect to see—never what we beforehand believe to be absolutely impossible. The eye, in such a case, must yield to what we imagine is our reason, the higher, truer, inner eye of the soul. No distinctness of vision could persuade a man that he saw a tree, if beforehand he had thoroughly convinced himself that such a thing as a tree had never been seen anywhere, or in any age, in the whole history of the world, and that such a thing, besides, had been proved, on the clearest grounds of scientific induction, to be physically impossible. He would find a thousand reasons, without difficulty, for repelling the evidence of his eyes. He would labour to account for the deception, would imagine what it might and must be, would use "divination and conjecture," would keep out of sight

this and the other appearance, would add in his fancy one and another feature or colour to the object, and make it out to approach something already in existence. But make of it what he might, it could never be to him a tree, for that was an impossibility.

But this mode of representation has two sides, and if we rarely find more than what we seek, on the other hand, we do usually find what we seek, and our finding it may be owing in great part to our seeking and expecting it, even as our not finding may be owing in great part to our not seeking and not expecting. Be this fully admitted on both sides! But nothing can be more sure than this—that, if we lay it down beforehand, as absolutely, physically impossible to find—be it what it may—no amount of evidence can, in the very nature of the case, be powerful enough to convince us of an impossibility. M. Renan, with a consciousness of uprightness, has, nevertheless, avowedly foreclosed his eye and his soul in one direction. How it may be, through what influences of birth, education, association, and intercourse, or of personal idiosyncracy, it has come about, I presume not to conjecture. But the fact is certain, is even freely announced. Miracles, to M. Renan, are unbelievable on any evidence. A Divine Incarnation, the most transcendental of all miracles, is unbelievable and absolutely impossible. The Gospels *must* contain

what to him is alone conceivable, or even possible—a human character, that is, an imperfect character; and his effort, from first to last, is only and wholly to interpret and explain the record in such a way that it shall appear consistent with this presupposition.

I ventured to say in the outset, and now, perhaps, sufficient reason has been furnished for repeating with emphasis, that M. Renan wants the antecedent susceptibility which is indispensable to a fair interpreter of the life of Jesus. With all his clearness of vision, does he not want the eye to see, and with all his enthusiasm and warmth, does he not want the soul to feel the highest and most sacred glories of Jesus' nature? I acknowledge and admire the sweetness, the beauty, the grace, and the exquisite pathos and moral power of many of the passages of the "Vie de Jésus." Thank God for them! They reveal the inconsistency of other portions, and of the whole drift and purpose of the piece. Perhaps the very strongest reply to the book is even the book itself. The passages, now to be quoted—a few out of many—are utterly irreconcileable with the whole and with its expressed design. "Il a créé le ciel des âmes pures, où se trouve ce qu'on demande en vain à la terre, la parfaite noblesse des enfants de Dieu, la pureté absolue, la totale abstraction des souillures du

monde . . . . . La fondation de la vraie religion est bien son œuvre. Après lui, il n'y a plus qu'à développer et à féconder . . . . . Avant Jésus la pensée religieuse avait traversé bien des révolutions ; depuis Jésus, elle a fait de grandes conquêtes : on n'est pas sorti, cependant, on ne sortira pas de la notion essentielle que Jésus a créée ; il a fixé, pour toujours, l'idée du culte pur." * "C'est bien le royaume de Dieu, en effet, je veux dire le royaume de l'esprit, qu'il fondait ; et si Jésus, du sein de son Père, voit son œuvre fructifier dans l'histoire, il peut bien dire avec vérité, Voilà ce que j'ai voulu." †

"La première pensée de Jésus, pensée tellement profonde chez lui, qu'elle n'eut probablement pas d'origine et tenait aux racines mêmes de son être, fut qu'il était fils de Dieu, l'intime de son Père, l'exécu-

* "Vie de Jésus," pp. 445–46. "He has created the heaven of pure souls, where that which is sought for in vain on earth is found, the perfect nobleness of the children of God, absolute purity, total deliverance from the stains of the world. . . . . The foundation of true religion is verily his work. After him, it remains only to develop it and make it productive. . . . . Before Jesus, religious thought had passed through many revolutions ; since Jesus, it has made great conquests ; meantime no one has displaced, no one will displace, the essential idea which Jesus has created ; he has fixed for ever the principle of pure worship."

† Ibid. p. 121. "In reality it is the kingdom of God, I should rather say the kingdom of Spirit which he founded ; and if Jesus, from the bosom of his Father, sees his work fructify among mankind, he can well say with truth, 'Behold what I have desired.'"

teur de ses volontés."* "Au premier rang de cette grande famille des vrais fils de Dieu, il faut placer Jésus. Jésus n'a pas de visions; Dieu ne lui parle pas comme à quelqu'un hors de lui; Dieu est en lui; il se sent avec Dieu, et il tire de son cœur ce qu'il dit de son Père. Il vit au sein de Dieu par une communication de tous les instants."†

And this Being! is it credible, is it possible? This Being! who opened a new heaven to men, a heaven of absolute purity and of complete deliverance from all the stains of the world, who revealed the idea of pure worship, and founded the one, true, eternal religion! This Being! who proclaimed the reign of God, the reign of the Spirit, the reign of rectitude and purity and truth and love! This Being! in whose nature was rooted from the first the conviction that He was the Son of God, the intimate of His Father, the executor of His holiest purposes! This Being! who was in God, and God in Him, who lived in the bosom of God by an unbroken communication with

* "Vie de Jésus," p. 118. "The first thought of Jesus, a thought so deep within him that probably it had no ascertainable beginning, and took hold of the very roots of his being, was, that he was the Son of God, the intimate of his Father, the executor of his purposes."

† Ibid. p. 75. "In the first rank of the great family of the true children of God, we must place Jesus. He has no visions; God does not speak to him as to one outside; God was in him; he felt himself with God; and out of his heart he drew whatever he spoke concerning his Father. He lived in the bosom of God, by a perpetual communication with him."

Him! This Being! even this Being! was the same whose "conscience was impure," who was Eastern, that is, corrupt, in His sense of right and wrong; who descended to deception, dishonesty, and falsehood, and who gained by lies disciples to truth and God! It is incredible—it is impossible! The contradiction is direct. It shocks every idea of the reason, every intuition of the pure conscience, and every feeling of the sound heart. Oh, Saviour! How infinite is Thy clemency, Thy patience! Thou hast still to bear, as of old Thou didst bear, the evil thoughts, the false judgments and the contradiction of men against Thyself!

I cannot and dare not argue here! Discussion is revolting, would be profane and not pertinent. M. Renan, in my humble judgment, is manifestly wanting in moral perception and moral sensibility. He has nobly cultivated the intellectual, the imaginative, and the sentimental regions of his soul, but he has not cultivated, or not consulted, or not listened to, the highest part of his being, his moral and religious nature. An honest, upright mind is aghast at the atrocious contradiction he depicts. A Being full of God, cherished in the bosom of the pure God, as a Son by His Father, and employed in conducting the highest and holiest purposes of Divinity, and all the while practising deception, and uttering and

living a lie! It is too, too sad! To me, it is awful beyond the power of language to express, beyond the utmost force of thought to conceive!

Let us pass, not to lower, but to more comprehensive and general ground. M. Renan concedes the unsurpassed wisdom of Jesus, at least in some directions; concedes the noble originality, the loftiness and the purity of His teaching, such as no former age had reached, and such as no future age shall exceed. More than this, M. Renan, with whatever palpable and incredible inconsistency, concedes that, though not free from weaknesses and vices common to humanity, Jesus rose to a kind and a degree of moral goodness and of Godliness unsurpassed and unsurpassable. But how, we ask, was this possible? We admit the fact, and far exceed M. Renan in our estimate of it; but how was it possible? How shall we explain and account for it, that this man had ascended to a wealth of wisdom, and to an elevation and a purity of moral character, absolutely never reached before or since? Who was He? Many honoured sages the world has produced, who, by great original powers, by earnest and resolute self-cultivation, by long years of study and research, by various travels to the great seats and the great masters of learning, by intimate intercourse with the wise and the good, aided perhaps by the accidents of birth and

property, or by the patronage of the great and the opulent, have, at the close of a long life bequeathed undying legacies to future generations. But who was this? Zoroaster, Confucius, Çakya-Mouni, Parmenides, Pythagoras, Socrates, Plato, Zeno, erect themselves as noble columns in the past ages, from the earliest historic period—columns to which the eye of the world is even now lifted up with veneration and gratitude. But who was this, who by the confession of M. Renan towers above them all, at least in some, and these the highest possible directions? Who was this? A Jew, son of a subjugated, an abject, a bigoted, and a proud race! A young man who lived only to the age of thirty-three! A working carpenter, all his life, without education, except the commonest, without patronage, without the opportunity of travel, or of intercourse with cultivated society, or with any society, except the commonest, who never was out of Judea in his life, and was destitute of all so-called advantages of every kind!

At the least, it is as certain, on the face of it, as any human thing can be, that this poor young man —this untaught, unprivileged, unpatronised, working carpenter, cannot have been merely what he seemed to be, and no more. It is impossible, unbelievable! He stands alone, without precedent, without suc-

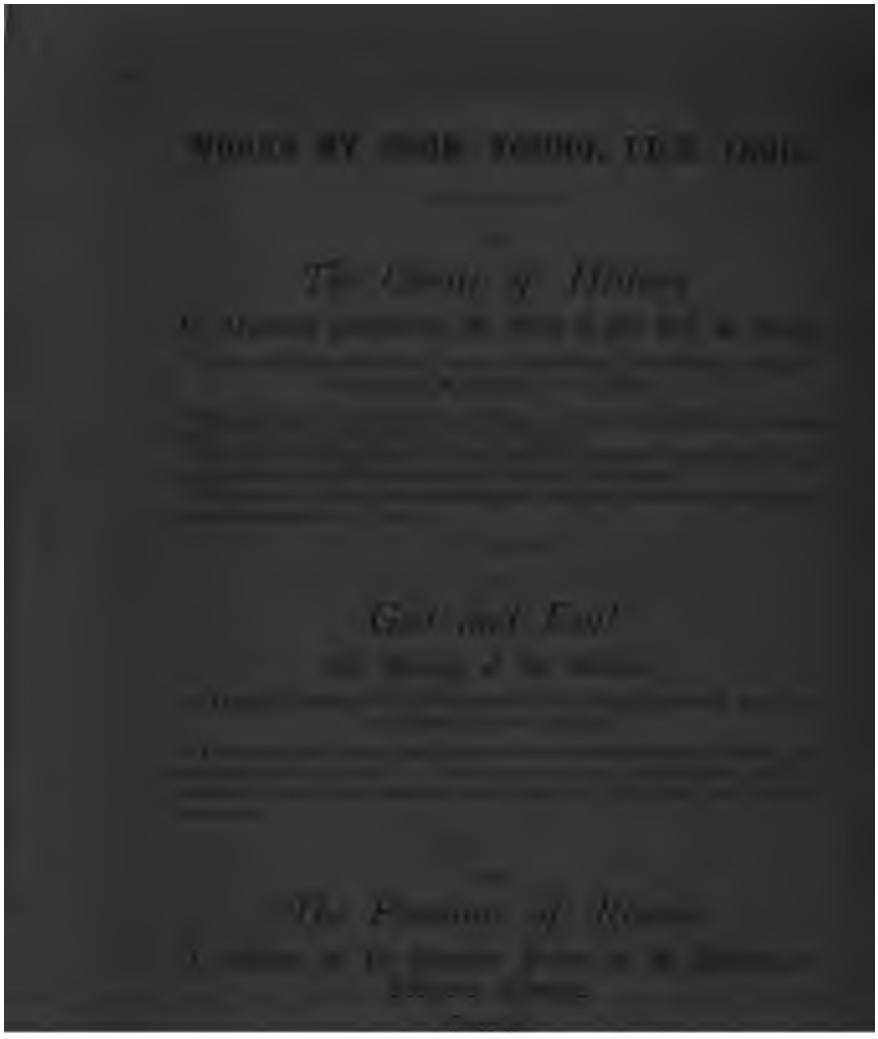
cessor, without parallel in all the ages. An unparalleled fact can be accounted for, only by an unparalleled cause. There must have been something in this mere youth, conditioned as he was, something vast enough and deep enough, to solve the problem of His life. There must have been a unique, an unexampled relation between Him and the great Source of Spiritual power, a relation unrealized in the case of all other men; for, otherwise, one or more of the race like to Him, must have appeared in the history of the world. But not one such, not a solitary unit approaching Him in the most distant degree, has once appeared. A mystery peculiar to Him alone, a mystery so vast and so profound as to reach and cover over all the wonders of His life is absolutely demanded in this case. An indwelling of God in man, in this solitary and unparalleled instance, an access of the soul of Jesus to the Fountain of Power, and an access of the Great God to the Soul of Jesus, never but once realized; this, and this alone, is capable of accounting rationally for indubitable facts which are otherwise wholly inexplicable.

There is more. This young working man, by His life and by His death, by His teaching and his spirit has for many centuries exerted a supreme influence

on the civilization of the world, and on the minds and lives of men; and is at this hour, after nearly two thousand years, exerting an influence profound and enduring, which it is almost a mockery to say is unexampled, for there is no single name or cluster of names, no influence and no combination of influences, which can offer the shadow of a shade of likeness to it.

There is more still. This young working man has succeeded in establishing Himself, through all the past ages, establishing Himself personally, not only in the thoughts, but in the deepest depths of the hearts of myriads on myriads of men. At this moment, after nearly two thousand years, there are myriads on myriads all over the world, to whom Jesus, the real Person so called, the one only Divine Man, is unutterably dear, whose love to Him is strong as death, who really live for Him, and to Him, and who would die for Him, were they called to the scaffold or the stake. This is the one wonder and mystery of the ages, and must have a deep and real foundation. A fact wholly unique and unparalleled must have a unique and unparalleled ground. *God in Jesus* alone interprets and illuminates *The Jesus of the Gospels,* and the results of His earthly life.

The author of "The Christ of History" abides by his argument, only presumptive though it be. The presumption rises to absolute certainty. Surely this is the Son of God!

THE END.

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